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THE CHILDREN'S PULPIT

VOLUME III

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THE CHILDREN'S PULPIT

A Comprehensive Library of Religious and Moral Instruction for the use of Preachers and Teachers in the Preparation of Sermons and Addresses to the Young

VOLUME III

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY
THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY
FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY
FIFTH AND SIXTH SUNDAYS AFTER THE EPIPHANY
SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

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THE CHILDREN'S PULPIT

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

The Collect

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, Who dost govern all things in Heaven and earth; mercifully hear the supplications of Thy people, and grant us Thy peace all the days of our life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Collect for the Second Sunday after the Epiphany is found in the Sacramentary of Gregory (A.D. 590). The design of the proper services from Epiphany to Septuagesima appears to be the setting forth of Christ's *Divine Nature*, by bringing before our notice some of His earlier miracles. This design is remarkably evident in the Gospel appointed for last Sunday, which shows how Jesus manifested His Divine wisdom to the Jewish doctors. It is, perhaps, still more evident in to-day's Gospel, which narrates His *first* miracle—the turning water into wine. By this He "manifested" forth His glory, and His disciples are said to have "believed on Him." The *Collect* is a fit commentary on the Gospel, for it addresses God (and by implication our Lord also) as One Who governs all things both in Heaven and earth. The power of Christ over earthly things was shown plainly when, by the mere exercise of His will, He effected a change in the essential qualities and outward appearance of one of the elements of the natural world, the water which was produced at the marriage feast.

The Peace of God

"*The Lord will bless His people with peace.*"—*Ps. xxix.* 11.

(i.) Repeat text. Read a few verses of Psalm, about a great storm sweeping over the country. Thunder, lightning, and rain—trees broken, rocks shaken. Perhaps Psalmist had seen such a storm, felt it awful and grand, but not frightened. The thunder was God's voice, the rain ruled by Him. His people would have peace—they knew He was King, and ordered all. Remember the story of the storm on the Lake (St Mark iv. 37-39), the fear of disciples? Did not think that Jesus ordered the waves, perhaps thought it all a chance. He showed His power. Then peace came to the sea, and to their hearts.

(ii.) Think of storms of another kind. Opposed to peace is war. Read sometimes of civil wars. Most terrible to a country—seems no safety anywhere. Brings ruin—villages burnt, corn destroyed, houses wrecked. Wars like these have been in England. [Wars of English and Danes, Wars of Roses, Great Rebellion.] When Collects made, and prayers first used, country often disturbed by wars—a very unquiet time. God's people prayed

for peace. See in Prayer Book how often this prayer comes, "Give peace in our time," etc. (Second Collect for Morning and Evening Prayer, Collect for Fifth Sunday after Trinity.) Knew that nothing happened by chance. One King over all. He would hear their "supplications," and give peace to those who trusted Him. So Collect for to-day. Repeat it (*cf.* Ps. xlvi. 1, 2). [Story of Indian Mutiny, and condition of English in India might illustrate the *tone* of the Collect.]

(iii.) So in Collect we pray for——? Whose peace? For how long? On what grounds?

Think where this peace is needed.

I. In our own country, is there peace or war? Think of this neighbourhood. No armies come to encamp in the fields; in towns the busy work goes on peaceably, in markets and mills, nothing like the disturbances of former days. This is peace—given by God—thank Him for it. But sometimes hear of riots, quarrels of parties, angry crowds in England. And often war in other lands. Our soldiers and sailors have to go and fight. Some perhaps from this parish gone out to Africa, or India. English people in colonies not so safe as we. Tribes near them who are only half-civilised. Less peace there than at home. Perhaps they pray the Collect to-day. We pray with them. Not old enough to understand all these wars (e.g. in Egypt or South Africa), but very terrible to those who live near them. Yet we know Who rules and orders all things and pray for His peace: "That it may please Thee to give to all nations, unity, peace, and concord."

II. In our hearts.—Sometimes angry thoughts, evil passions there—or sorrow and grief—so difficult then to have peace. Collect makes us think of days to come: "All the days of our life." When we get older know more of care, more troubles come then than now. But Jesus gives peace to those that love Him. Remember His promise to disciples. So much trouble all the days of their life (St John xiv. 27, xvi. 33). (iv.) So learn to-day of the God and Saviour Who orders all our life for us. Nothing can hurt us if He keeps us. He will hear our prayer, and the peace of God will guard (like a sentinel guarding a fortress) our hearts and minds (Phil iv. 7).

"Grant us Thy peace throughout our earthly life,
Our balm in sorrow, and our stay in strife;
Then when Thy voice shall bid our conflicts cease,
Call us O Lord to Thine eternal peace."

—*Rev. A. E. Meredith, M.A.*

Peace

"*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace.*"—*Isa. xxvi.* 3.

We are to talk to-day about peace.

I. When a country is free from the attacks of foreign enemies, or is not engaged in wars, we speak of it as being at peace. Spain, just now is not at war with any other country: is it at peace? So that for a country which really is at peace, it must be free from troubles at home, as well as from wars abroad. External peace is generally the result of power. The country is too powerful to be attacked. Wisdom, firmness, and kindness on the part of rulers, generally produces internal peace. Now God is omnipotent, Luke i. 37, etc.; wise, 1 Tim. i. 17, etc.; good, Ex. xxxiv. 6; Ps. xxxiii. 5, etc. As the Collect says, He is "Almighty," and He "governs all things in Heaven and earth," Neh. ix. 6. So that God's people, having Him for a King, may expect peace, Rom. xiv. 17. Then (1) True peace comes from God.

II. (*a*) If a child does wrong—disobeys father or mother—is that child

at peace? If a boy breaks a vase or some article in a room, he is not at peace till he has confessed what he has done. What does he hope for? Then forgiveness brings peace. (*b*) If we have a task to perform which is, perhaps, beyond our strength—what will bring us peace? Then help in trouble brings peace. (*c*) Many a man has to work hard for a livelihood—yet he meets troubles and trials cheerfully: he has peace of mind; he has done his best; he hopes that things will come right. So hope gives peace.

Now, we have sins to be forgiven. There is no peace for the wicked, Isa. xlviii. 22. God will forgive us, 1 John, i. 8, 9, Ephes. iv. 32. Hence peace comes to us, Rom. v. 1. We need help against our enemies—we are sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before us—God will give us help and peace, Heb. iv. 16; Isa. xxvi. 3; Ps. xlvi. 1; Acts xxvi. 22. In our troubles and trials upon earth we have the thought that here we have no continuing city; we seek one to come. We have many promises to give us hope and peace, John xiv. 1; 2 Tim. iv. 8; 1 Peter i. 3, 4, etc. What three things produce peace? Remember then (2) The peace of God's people comes from—(*a*) Forgiveness of our past sins. (*b*) Help in present trials. (*c*) Glorious promises for the future.

From Whom does true peace come? How can we hope to obtain it? Hence we ask in the Collect, "mercifully hear the supplications of Thy people," etc. Where else do we ask for this "peace"? See Second Collect at Evening Prayer, Litany, etc. Whose especial office is it to give peace? Rom. xiv. 17; John xiv. 27; Gal. v. 22. Would you like this peace? How can you get it? See how St Paul was at peace in the gaol at Philippi, when men had done all they could to trouble him, Acts xvi. Whose people must you be, to be at peace? How long would you desire this peace? God will give it you. He never alters. He is "everlasting," Ps. xc. 2; Matt. vii. 7; James i. 17, etc.

The Children's Peace

"*Great shall be the peace of thy children.*"—*Isa. liv.* 13.

Introduction.—The prophet Isaiah lived more than 700 years B.C. His writings contain many glowing pictures of the peace and prosperity that should mark the Messiah's reign. This chapter discusses the privileges of the subjects of this Heavenly King, and this verse 13 tells how the children were to be cared for. We find in it certain facts distinctly stated, and these facts imply certain duties, to which we must all attend if we would personally realise the facts themselves.

I. What, then, are the Facts here distinctly stated?—They are two in number. 1. The children are to be taught of the Lord. (1) Many are not taught at all, except bad things by the worst teachers. Children of the heathen—City Arabs. (2) Here are children taught—taught while they are children, when the deepest impressions are made, of which the lessons last the longest—taught by the best Teacher, Who employs parents, teachers, the Bible, His Holy Spirit; taught by Him, and thus the best things. 2. The children's peace shall be great. (1) War in every form is a great evil. Whence come wars? (James iv. 1.) War between man and man—between man and God—war in the heart (1 Peter ii. 11). (2) How glorious and sweet a thing is peace. Much said about it in the Bible. God, a God of peace; Gospel, a message of peace; Jesus came to bring and make peace, peace in the soul, with conscience, with God. One of the greatest blessings promised in the New Testament, children of peace and peacemakers are blessed. Consider these two facts; the children shall be taught, and shall have peace.

II. Now we pass on to consider the Duties that we have to heed.—They arise out of the facts we have noticed. 1. The children must be willing to learn of their teacher. The boy who plays truant misses the school-lesson; he is unwilling to learn, does not reflect that "for the soul to be without knowledge is not good," that "the wise man is strong," etc. Some are unwilling to be taught of God. It requires a humble, prayerful, teachable heart. It needs perseverance—little by little, "here a little, there a little," etc. Try again to master difficulties. How Samuel learned by keeping his ear open. 2. They must constantly practise what they learn, con the lesson over; not only seek peace, but pursue it. Follow peace with all men; live at peace with God; keep the conscience void of offence, so as to preserve peace within; keep the peace yourselves, and be peacemakers between others. Mr Dickenson, of Birmingham, did this so constantly, that he earned for himself the title of "The Peacemaker." Once, when two men were disputing about an arbitration, a third said, "Has John Dickenson anything to do with it?" "Yes," was the reply. "Then all is right, I am sure." In this opinion all concurred and the dispute ended.

Found in Peace

"*Be diligent, that ye may be found of Him in peace.*"—2 *Peter iii.* 14.

Jesus Christ will come at the end of the world. He will then judge us according to what He finds us. He invites us now to come to Him to be saved, that we may be ready to face Him when He comes to judge. He speaks to one and all; He calls all to come to the knowledge of the Gospel, all ages, all characters, all classes, all nations. He makes a large invitation, and He makes it freely. The blessings He offers are many: the people He offers them to are also many.

A man had a large net. He cast it into the sea; he knew many might find their way into his net. He cast it in with great expectation; he cast it in with much hope. He left it in long enough to gather a large supply; he gave plenty of time for it to be well filled. He waited and waited a long time, and he waited to some purpose; it did gather many fish. It gathered large and small, good and bad; it gathered of every kind of fish. That sea was indeed full of fish; there were swarms of every description—some fine fish, worth waiting long for, some poor little fish, worth nothing at all. And all had time and opportunity given them to come within this net.

But not more time and opportunity than all have of coming within reach of the Gospel. The Gospel is addressed to all; the good news is free to all; the invitation is made to all. Ministers and teachers are ever speaking; they are ever asking and calling; they are ever looking and waiting. They cast forth their Gospel net, and spread it out; they invite all to come to Christ: and all may hear Christ's own invitation, "Come unto Me." He is waiting to receive us; He calls to you and me; He calls to your friends; He calls to your neighbours. Even if there are some that do not care to hear, still He calls to them, and waits for them, too, to come within sound of the Gospel; He calls to others in distant lands. We may all go, Sunday after Sunday, to the house of God to hear His Word, and gather together from every different part, even as these many kinds of fish were gathered together into the net. Oh, let us *press into* the net—gladly come together to hear the Word of God. On one occasion, when Jesus was teaching, "the people pressed upon Him to hear the Word of God." Let us press round Him while the net is spread out, waiting for us.

How long did the fisherman wait? When did he begin to look at his

fish, and draw the net in? When his net was full. Then he drew it to shore; then he sat down to examine each, each one singly and separately; then he found that all kinds were mixed together; so he separated them, "he gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away." He had not stopped to see if there was any difference before this; he had let them remain all mixed together. But now he carefully looks at each.

"So shall it be at the end of the world": Till then, we shall be all mingled together. We cannot look around us without seeing this; we find many who care nothing at all about Jesus intermixed with God's children. This intermingling will go on through all time, even till the end of the world. *One* will judge at the last: He will send His messengers to do His will, and separate one from the other. He will know the exact state of each one, and will "gather the good" into the realms of glory, "but cast the bad away." "He will not at all acquit the wicked"; but "the Lord *knoweth* them that are His," and "He knoweth them that trust in Him." A solemn time it will be. He will then "render to every man according to his deeds: to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life." "But unto them that do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath," "in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ" (Rom. ii. 6-8, 16).

But see once more *who* will be received, and *who* cast away. Look again, think again. All have been invited to be saved. All may be received into the Gospel net. All have time and opportunity given them to "come." All may hear the truth and Word of God. All may be called to the knowledge of the truth. And yet *not all* are received of Him at last—not *all* are "found of Him in peace." Does not this solemnly remind you and me that many of us may be and are within the sound of the Gospel, and yet are not influenced by the Gospel; that many hear, but do not heed; that many know the truth, but do not obey it; that many hear the loving invitation, calling "Come unto Me," but do not receive it, do not believe it? Christ Himself may truly say to such, "Ye *will not come* unto Me that ye might have life." Many have a Saviour offered, that they may have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, but yet are not "found of Him in peace." All such are in danger, at last, after such calling and waiting, to be "cast away" as worthless and bad.

"Wherefore" I say to each one of you, from the youngest to the eldest, "*be diligent*, that ye may be found of Him in peace." Be not content with hearing the Bible, but lay up its sacred words, to feed thereon and grow. Be not content with knowing about a Saviour, but give your hearts to Him, seek Him for your own, till you can feel, He is *my* Saviour. Then, at the last great day, you will be "found of Him in peace"; you will be gathered by Him into realms of glory.

The Greatness and Goodness of God

"The peace of God which passeth all understanding."—Phil. iv. 7.

In the Gospel for this Sunday we have the account of Christ's first miracle, in which He "manifested forth His glory" as the Lord of Creation. As the Collect expresses it—He "governs all things both in Heaven and earth." And, as He is the Lord of Creation, so also is He the Lord of the New Creation. He Who could change the water into wine, imparting to the colourless and tasteless fluid the elements needful to the transformation of its character, can also change that heart which receives Him as a guest

(Rev. iii. 20), and fill it with a peace that passeth all understanding. This is the peace for which we pray in the Collect. And the effects of the New Creation—the wine—we find described in the Epistle. It strengthens and stimulates us to good works—enabling us to dispense to others those gifts which we receive as partakers with Christ; to love—not only our brethren, but—our enemies, even as Christ loved us; and to rejoice in every kind of worldly trial.

The Sketch of this lesson is comparatively short, but is as suggestive as some which are more lengthy; because the teacher in this case needs not so much to be supplied with materials as to have them arranged for him. How much might not be said on God's power, wisdom, and goodness in the works of Creation! The most experienced teacher, therefore, must guard against losing himself in its vastness; nevertheless an endeavour ought to be made to make the class apprehend God as the Governor of Heaven and earth, and understand the teaching of the Book of Nature (Rom. i. 20)—"The Hand that made us is Divine." If the Lesson be taught in the spirit of Ps. viii. 3, 4, it cannot fail to be effective.

The word "supplication" in this Collect suggests the attitude of prayer. It is derived from two Latin words, *sub* and *plico*, literally meaning I fold under. We "supplicate" God on folded knees. In the second text for repetition "prayer" is the whole of our act of worship, including both adoration and supplication; the "supplication" is the particular request or expression of need which the prayer contains—its petition.

St Paul tells us (Col. i. 15) that Jesus Christ is "the image of the invisible God." When we see Him we see the Father. Now read John ii. 1-12 (Gospel). Here we find Jesus "manifesting forth His glory." It teaches us two things. 1. The greatness of Christ. Water changed into wine (ver. 9), and good wine (ver. 10). All the intermediate acts of creation and preparation dispensed with. The thing done in a moment and silently. [Illust. —Plants and trees growing.] 2. The goodness of Christ. See how much He made—about 120 gallons! A large store for the newly-married couple. Now Jesus Christ good and great because He is God. And on this goodness and greatness we rely in the prayer of our Collect to-day.

I. God's Greatness.—We pray to Him, "Almighty and everlasting God, Who dost govern," etc. This an acknowledgment of His greatness. And He is great—1. In Himself. He is "Almighty." With Him nothing is impossible (Luke i. 37); none can stay His hand; and "everlasting" (Ps. xc. 2) without beginning, without end. 2. In His rule. "Who dost govern all things," etc. (*a*) In its extent. "All things in Heaven and earth." All things were created by Him (Gen. i. 1), hence by Him all things consist (Col. i. 17). "In Heaven"—i.e. in the Heaven we cannot see, where Jesus is (Phil. iii. 20)—Angels do His pleasure (Ps. ciii. 20); and in the Heavens we can see—the sun, moon, and stars—all obedient to His rule (Isa. xlviii. 13). And in earth—mountains, valleys, hills—land and sea, all doing His work. Read Ps. civ. (parts). Even men's "unruly wills and affections" ordered by God (Collect for Fourth Sunday after Easter). (*b*) In its nature. Look at the Heavens—all moving in proper place exactly as intended to move. Look at the earth—rain to water the earth, and sunshine to make things grow—seed, plant, fruit, seed again "after his kind" (Gen. i. 11, 12); and all in silence (comp. above)—day and night—the four seasons! How wise He must be Who planned and "governs" all these things! [Illust.—Watch; steam-engine.] Well may we say to God, "In wisdom hast Thou made them all" (Ps. civ. 24). But what has God's greatness to do with us? Let us see. Read Rom. viii. 28. "We know that all things"

(i.e. "in Heaven and earth") "work together" (as we have just seen) "for good." And to whom? "To them that love God." See here—

II. God's Goodness.—If God were only great we might stand in awe of Him; but as He is good also we may learn to trust in His greatness. He is able to do for us "exceeding abundantly" (Eph. iii. 20). See, then, why we pray to God in Collect—"Mercifully hear the supplications," etc. 1. He listens to His people's prayers. His "people" are those who "love Him" (above). And we may be sure of this, even though sometimes He seems not to hear us. Read again verses 3, 4 of Gospel. Mary told Jesus of their wants; He seemed to refuse her. But was it so? See ver. 5. Mary still trusted in Him. And in His own time ("hour") and way He granted her request. Let us pray like Mary and wait like her, and be certain that God will hear our "supplications," Ps. cxiv. 18, 19. Only let us always remember that He sometimes answers our prayers by refusing them. We sometimes ask for what is not "expedient" for us (Prayer of St Chrysostom). But one thing we pray for in Collect which He will never refuse—2. He gives to us "the blessing of peace" (Ps. xxix. 10, Prayer Book version). So we pray—"Grant us Thy peace all the days of our life." Notice in this peace—(*a*) What it is. It is "peace with God"—a sense of pardon of our sins (Rom. v. 1) through Christ (1st text for rep.), so that we may serve Him "with a quiet mind" (Collect for 21st Sunday after Trinity). (*b*) How excellent it is. It is God's peace "Who governs all things"—"Thy peace." So 1st text for rep., "My peace I give unto you," "not as the world giveth," etc. (Comp. 2nd Evening Collect.) And therefore world cannot take it away; we are lifted above it, John xvi. 33. So worldly tribulations need not make us afraid, if we have God's peace. Is it not a peace that passeth all understanding? Let us pray that we may have it "all the days of our life." So may we dwell "in rest and quietness."

What then have we learnt to-day?—1. We may call God our Governor. See Ps. viii. 1. The Ruler of the Universe rules for us and our good. See what He says, Isa. xxxii. 18: "My people shall dwell in quiet resting-places." In this let us trust; so shall our hearts not be troubled. 2. We must obey His laws. He gives peace to His people; but commands them to be at peace with all men. This we can only do by loving all men as ourselves (Luke x. 27). And if we do, then see how we shall live, Rom. xii. 10, 13-17 (Epistle). This the way to keep your hearts and minds in the peace of God.

Pleasant Ways and Peaceful Paths

"Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."—Prov. iii. 17.

When we look at a verse in the Bible, it is something like looking up into the sky, when it begins to get dark. We look first, and see nothing; then we look a little longer, and see a star, and another, and another, till it seems all stars. That is something like looking at a verse in the Bible. Let us see if we can find any little stars here. I am sure there are some.

In the beginning of the verse, it says, "ways," and in the end "paths." Why are they called "ways of pleasantness" and "paths of peace"? What is the difference? Can you think?

"Ways" you know are broad; "paths" are little, narrow, retired places. Did you ever know what it was to go and have a day's "pleasure," and when you come home to feel no "peace"? Do you know the difference between pleasure and peace? You know you have pleasure, but you cannot

go into little, quiet places, where there is peace. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

If we may compare them, "pleasantness" is like a rose which grows in open places; peace is like a little violet, which grows in the shade. Which will you like best—the rose of "pleasure," or the violet of "peace"? You see here we are to have them both—"Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

I will point out one very important word. Do you know which it is? "All"—"All her paths are peace." Do you think we can say that of anything in the world besides? Is anything else "all peace"? Have you not generally something to disappoint? Somebody is unkind? There comes some sting afterwards in most things. But here, "all her paths are peace."

Will you turn to Proverbs x. 22—it is a beautiful verse, let us all read it together—"The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it." Now turn to Psalm cxix. 165—all these three texts mean the same thing—"Great peace have they which love Thy law, and nothing shall offend them."

"All her ways are peace." I think some people make a great mistake about religion. When they talk about religion, they are always saying, "Don't—don't"; and, "You mustn't—you mustn't." I know that persons go to a little child in the nursery, and say, "You mustn't play with your playthings to-day—it is Sunday. You mustn't take a walk to-day—it is Sunday. You mustn't do this, and you mustn't do that."

This is not the right way to talk. This is not religion. You should say to the little child in the nursery—"Here are some pretty little pictures for Sunday, and pretty toys, different to others. You may take a walk if you like, and you may go to church if you like. Sunday is the happiest day of the week."

Some people speak thus to a boy about religion—"O don't be religious"; and his own heart and the devil say the same: "If you are religious, you must give up all your pleasures; if you are a religious boy, you mustn't shout or play about so much; you must never go to a ball or to a theatre, and a great many other things you must not do if you become religious"—as if religion was giving all up.

I should say to a boy, "If you are a religious boy, you will have much pleasanter companions than worldly and wicked ones, and you will find their society much sweeter; you will have a great many new pleasures, such as you have no idea of. Now it will be very nice to do good things; it will be better than all other things. I do not say you mustn't buy tarts and cakes, but I will show you a pleasanter way of spending your money. I do not say you mustn't go here, nor you mustn't go there; but I say, For everything God takes away, He gives something better in its place." "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

If a boy has a stick in his hand, you may not succeed in wrenching it from him; but if you offer him an apple, he will immediately drop the stick. Therefore give up worldly things, because something better is before you. I do not think persons act rightly about religion; and I do not wonder at boy's thinking it a forbidding, dull, and stupid thing.

Now we are going to look at "pleasant" things in religion. It is a very pleasant thing (is it not?) to walk in the sun. Now, if you are religious through your life, you are always walking in the sunshine. Look at St John viii. 12, Jesus says, "I am the Light of the World: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the Light of life." I will tell you what it means. If you love Jesus Christ, and walk where you are

following Him, you will be on the sunny side of everything; you will not be on the dark side of the hedge, but on the sunny side. You will see everything in sunshine—you will have a happy feeling in your heart, which will make everything look sunny.

Sometimes you may take a walk through a dull part of the country, but if you have an agreeable friend as your companion, and you have pleasant conversation as you go along, it makes the walk "pleasant." If you are religious, you will always have a "pleasant" Friend with you. Do you not remember what the two disciples said, who walked with Jesus to Emmaus, Luke xxiv. 32, "Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?" And if you turn to the Song of Solomon, you will read a beautiful verse, chapter viii. 5, "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" Must it not be a happy walk, when we are "leaning upon Christ"?

Therefore you see it is always a sunny walk; and a walk with the best Friend in the whole world. It must be very "pleasant"—and "a path of peace."

Now look at some of the things which make it so "pleasant"; and then we will look at the little, quiet, retired violet "paths of peace."

I am going to speak first about "the ways"—open things; things we do with other people: like the public road: then I shall talk of the little quiet "paths" where we go alone. Do you understand that?

Will you turn to Psalm cxxxiii. 1, and you will see one of the "pleasant" things. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Who makes brothers and sisters agree, and never quarrel? Who makes schoolfellows agree, and never quarrel? The God of love. There must be "peace" and love in a heart where God is. If there is quarrelling in a house—if brothers and sisters quarrel—it is because God is not there. "He maketh men to be of one mind in a house." It is such a pleasant sight to see brothers and sisters unselfish; not always wishing the best for themselves, but for others; not speaking crossly, but striving to make each other happy. "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" When all assemble, around the fire or table, in love, and are happy together.

That is one of the "pleasant" things; now we will look at another. If I see a boy or girl go out to do some little act of kindness, there is no "pleasure" like it. Try it, my dear children. I think you have tried it a little, but not so much as you might. Try if it will not make you every day more happy if you do little acts of kindness to somebody. It may be to some companions or sick persons—you go and read and speak kindly to them. It may be any little thing—no matter how little. You will find it is the "pleasantest" thing in all the world.

Now I will tell you another thing. It is a very "pleasant" thing to be very busy. I do not know how you find it during the holidays; they are very nice, but they are not "pleasant" if they last too long. They are very stupid things if you have not some games to play or something to do. The fact is, as God has made us, we are never happy unless we are busy. The Angels in Heaven are very busy: they never rest. Jesus Christ was always busy when He was upon this earth. All God's people are busy. A person that is not busy never can be happy.

Two things you ought to be busy about. One is with your own heart, to keep it in good order, to pull up the weeds, to watch over yourselves, and to conquer yourselves. It is like having in your heart a little garden—

a nice thing to keep is a little garden. You are always to be busy; and it will be very "pleasant" to feel that the weeds are fewer, and the heart is getting into order. Self-victory is a very great "pleasure."

Another thing that you are to be busy about is your duty, no matter what it is. It may be to learn Latin and Greek, to learn your lessons well; if in business, to do your duty. You know what it is. God will show it to you. Whatever your duty is, be busy about it.

Somebody has said that every one of us is like a harp with a great many strings. I will tell you what he meant. You must always play in concert; everything bust be kept in concert. If anything is out of concert, it will be very bad.

There is your heart—one of the strings there must be holy thoughts; if a bad thought comes in, it is like a string out of tune. Then your words must be gentle, kind words. If a boy or girl speaks cross or angry words, it is out of tune; it spoils the concert. Then your feet must walk in the right path; they must go on errands of kindness: if they go a wrong way, the concert is broken. Your hands must be full of good works. If the hand strikes, the hand is out of tune. You have to keep all in tune, in concert—your thoughts, your words, your steps, and your actions with your hands. Take care that nothing gets out of tune; but that all is in good harmony, that there be sweet music, nothing jarring.

Is there no note wrong? Look at your thoughts, your words, your works, your hands—are they in concert? What a "pleasant" thing is sweet music when all goes nice; when the harmony is not marred. It will be thus with you if you keep all right within. It will be sweet music; perhaps sweeter to God than Angels' songs!

One more thing I have to say about "pleasant ways." If ever you went to Switzerland, or to any other place where there were high mountains, and you stayed there a little while, till you came to love those beautiful snow mountains—when you returned to England, and saw again its lovely scenery, you would feel, "All this is very pretty; but I do so miss those beautiful snow mountains, that seemed to touch the skies!"

I think it is very often so with us and the things of the world—if there is no Heaven in the background, everything is tame; but we want the snow mountains; we want something all around that should seem to crown it all; for how beautiful soever earthly things may be, and how "pleasant" soever, still they are dark—because there is no eternity, there is no Heaven, there are no snow mountains. If we have these, even in the background, it makes everything so "pleasant."

Mr Hitchcock, a learned man in America, mentions in one of his sermons a remarkable thing. He was preaching upon what he called "The dignity of the Christian"; and he told this little fact, that in Virginia, he once went down a very deep mine, indeed, where of course it was pitch dark—himself, and those accompanying him, were creeping along with their little candles, when they heard some sweet singing—they did not know whence it came, but went in the direction whence it sounded, and they came to a very old man.

Now I will tell you about this old man. He was a slave, and was blind. He had his eyes put out by the blasting of gunpowder in the mine. He was very old, and I will tell you what he did every day. Below this mine a door was kept shut to prevent the bad air from coming up; but when cars had to pass, it was obliged to be opened—for they have railways in these mines. This old man had to open this gate, which he could do by feeling.

Year after year this old blind slave had remained in this dark, cold, miserable mine, doing nothing else than opening the door, when the cars

went past. And yet he was singing so sweetly a very beautiful verse called, "Heaven in the morning." Though blind, he looked so happy; and they asked him to sing his song again, "Heaven in the morning," which he did. It was an odd place to find a Christian—a dark mine—for, though a poor blind slave, he was such: and he was very happy, because he felt sure of "Heaven in the morning." "Her ways are ways of pleasantness."

Now we must look at the "paths"—they are better still. I will tell you of a sweet little "path"—to feel God's forgiveness. Do you know that, my dear children? Can you say, "God has forgiven me all my sins for Jesus Christ's sake?" It is such a sweet little "path." It is "a path the vulture's eye hath not seen." It is a sweet feeling, "God has forgiven me my sin." I wish you to have that every night when you go to bed.

I will tell you another "pleasant, peaceful path." Indeed I have almost said it already. But I mean, have a quiet conscience. It is a sad thing when the conscience is not quiet.

Perhaps some in this church, this afternoon, have not a quiet conscience. They have done something very wrong. I do not know what it is; but God knows, and you know. You have not peace; for you have no reason to believe that God has forgiven you. Your conscience is not happy, and you cannot enjoy anything. The only way you can enjoy anything is for your conscience to get hardened; but you will never truly enjoy anything if you are a Christian, till conscience is quiet.

You know the children of Israel could not enjoy "the lamb" unless they knew "the blood" was on "the door-posts." O get rid of sin, if you would have a quiet conscience! "Let the little bird sing sweetly in the bosom," as Matthew Henry says.

One more thing I must mention—a sweet little "path of peace." The disciples, it is said, "went and told Jesus." It is such a sweet little "path," to be in the habit of going and telling Jesus Christ everything. He likes you to do so, and you will like it when you have done it. Wherever you are, feel God is with you. You can tell God everything.

Did you ever read about little Johnny being lost in the great wood all night?—but in the morning he was found. He was asked, "Were you not frightened? What did you do?" He said, "It grew dark, and Johnny said, 'God, take care of little Johnny.'" And then he slept all night, not at all frightened, because he had told God that he was there. That was real faith—a "path of peace."

There were some Indians, of whom I have read, who talked some time ago in an old Indian's hut; and the conversation turned on this, "Which is the most pleasant season of the year—winter, spring, summer or autumn?" I do not know which you like best; but I will tell you what the old Indian said.

"Did you notice," said he to the other Indians, "as you came here, a number of trees around my hut?" "Yes," they replied. He said, "Well, when it is spring, then you know the pretty buds come out in those trees, and I think, How beautiful is spring! When the summer comes, there is the sweet foliage, and birds sing on the trees, and I think, How beautiful is summer! When autumn comes, there is a beautiful tint upon the leaves, and nice ripe fruit, and I think, How beautiful is autumn! But when winter comes, and there are no leaves, and no fruit, and no singing of birds, I can better look up through the leafless branches and see the stars—and then I say, How beautiful is winter!" Was not that beautiful? I hope my dear children, you will all be able to "look up through the leafless branches, and see the stars."

But now, is it all happiness to a Christian? is there no hard work? Yes, there is some very hard work to be done. But have you not learned that all hard work is "pleasant"? Will there be no sorrow? Yes; but I will tell you what will happen. I will tell you a story, a fable of course.

A father had lost his child, and was very unhappy; and he went out early in the morning in the fields, and an Angel met him: there was beautiful dew upon the ground; and the Angel said to him, "Look on the dew." And the father said, "How beautiful!" And while talking, the sun rose, and the dew all melted away: and the father said, "I am so sorry that the beautiful dew did not stay." The Angel said, "Look up in the sky—look at that cloud—see that beautiful rainbow. The drops of dew that were on the blades of grass are up there making that rainbow!" The father said, "I am glad the dew is gone up into the rainbow." Is not that a beautiful fable? "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

Try in real earnest to give your hearts to God, and there will be "pleasant ways," and more "pleasant" ones yet to come. There is a "path" where they "walk in white"—where they "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth"—and "rivers of pleasure" for ever and for evermore. There is the end of that "path." "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace!"

The Peace of God

"My peace I give unto you."—St John xiv. 27.

The great object of a wise man's desire, as far as he is concerned for his present state of existence, is to gain a settled piece of mind, which shall be superior to human accidents. Prayer is the means of gaining that object. It not only leads the soul to God, but fixes it upon Him, as the only Being, Who can either save us altogether from spiritual trials, or support us under them—either not lead us into temptation, or deliver us from the evil it might bring with it: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee"; "he shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord."

This holy confidence in God is felt in proportion as we convince ourselves of the infinity of His power, the depth of His wisdom, and the extent of His goodness; and nothing will more firmly establish in our minds that conviction, than serious contemplation upon the works of creation, as they are displayed to us in the glories of the firmament, and in the course of this world's ordering. Our Heavenly Father is therefore addressed in this Collect, as the "Almighty and Everlasting God, Who governs all things both in Heaven and earth."

By thus addressing the Almighty, we are led to consider His infinite power, as an argument for a firm faith on our part in His providential care; and, at the same time, we adduce it as a strong plea for the especial exercise, on His part, of mercy towards us, who inhabit a world which, though but a speck in the creation, is still sustained by Him.

The address is worded with much attention to the natural workings of the human mind. The sentiments of awe, with which we contemplate God in His majesty as the Governor of the Heavens, would sink into fear, if they were not regulated by feelings of confidence in His love, when we meditate upon Him as the Governor of the earth also. He who beholds the starry firmament with proper feelings, and a just sense of the nature of the objects he views, cannot but contrast their glory with his own littleness—his own comparative insignificance. But he knows that the Being, Whose power is every moment exercised in sustaining the glorious worlds which he contem-

plates, careth also for him. That the same Divine care and superintendence, the same wisdom, the same infinite and all-present Providence, is exercised in causing the "grass to grow for the cattle, and the herb for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth"; as to sustain, in their Heavenly courses, suns and their systems. Nothing is too vast for the power of God, nothing is too mean for his care.

David takes up this idea, and reasons upon it with all the beauty which characterises the strains of the sweet Psalmist of Israel. He contemplates the immensity of God's power—he endeavours to realise to himself the immeasurable greatness, the wonderful omnipresence, and consequent omniscience of the Lord. He considers that to behold the things even of Heaven, is (as he terms it) humility in the Almighty, and thinks it almost impossible, that the creature should be allowed to pass the intermediate space between him and his Creator, and approach the throne of His Divine Majesty: "I am a worm, and no man,"—"the thoughts of men are vanity." He corrects his fear, and quiets his apprehensions, by reflecting, that still wider is the separation between God and our repented sins: "as far as the east is from the west," that is, as far as the imagination can conceive of distance, "so far hath He set our sins from Him"; so much nearer hath He drawn us to Him by cords of love, through Jesus Christ His Son.

Who then is in trouble—Let him flee unto the Lord his God: Whose power is so great, that all worlds are in subjection unto Him; and Whose Providence is so mercifully vouchsafed to the least of His creatures, that not a sparrow falleth to the ground without His knowledge; nor a hair of our head perisheth, but He knoweth it altogether. If He careth for the beasts that perish—for the plant that withereth—surely we may trust in Him to care for man. He will not more regard things formed, than the being for whom He formed them. He will not more regard perishable worlds than man, for whom these worlds were made—who will hereafter be immortal—and for whom an immortality of happiness hath been prepared by the Son of God. It is this last consideration which led St Paul to urge a holy confidence in prayer to everyone called by the name of Christ: "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things"? In my affliction, therefore, I will pray—pray to Him Who doth govern all things, both in Heaven and earth, and ordereth them for our good.

Periods there doubtless are in life, when the soul is so far oppressed by the severity of trial, temporal or spiritual, as well-nigh to sink under sorrow and distress: one dark cloud or misery weighs down its power; in its desolateness it is ready to exclaim, "My burden is too heavy for me to bear." In such an hour, O the blessedness of the Christian's privilege! To prayer he flees for refuge, nor flees in vain! The turbulence of the storm is then calmed. Thou, O Lord God Omnipotent! dost reign, and all is well. Thou art my stronghold, whereunto I may alway resort. Every earthly comfort hath forsaken me; but I am not desolate—because not forsaken by my God: "I will trust then in the Lord, and stay upon my God."

—Rev. John James, D.D.

God's Rest and Joy

"He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing."—Zeph. iii. 17.

All things, according to their nature, tend to rest. A stone, cast into the air, returns and reposes in quiet on the bosom of the earth. Disturb the

needle of a compass, and you will see it tremble to and fro, till at last it is fixed in the direction of the pole. When a lake has been vexed and tossed with a storm, it will foam and fret for a season, even after the wind has fallen, but soon it begins to sink by degrees into smooth calm. The very wind which makes the storm is all the while it rages blowing itself into rest, rushing in haste to sleep. These examples, however, are only of rest in stillness, such as belongs to things that have no life. But living creatures seek a higher rest, a rest of satisfaction. Look at that bird busily rearing her nest; at her work in the morning twilight, at it through the hours of sunshine, at it in the evening shadows. I remember how, when a boy, I used to watch the swallows building their little houses of clay under the eaves. Away down to the brookside they would go collecting their moistened earth—up then to the corner where the nest was growing; then when the little morsels brought in their bills had been added to the wall, off again for a fresh load—one after the other, busy, twittering, happy things. Now what were these little builders toiling for? Come by and by and see them sitting in their nests, hatching the eggs they have laid, and then a little later covering their young brood with outspread wings. It was for this pleasure they were working. When the Psalmist was driven from Jerusalem and the altars of God, he thought of the rest these little birds had in their nests, and he contrasted their happy lot with his own. For his soul, as all souls of men do, needed rest in God. There is no home, no perfect satisfaction for a creature except in the great Lord Who made him. David mourned his being driven from the courts of God's house, because there he had helps to get near God. A sinner cannot be at peace till he find his forsaken Father. You remember that Jesus invited sinners to come to Him, and get rest. His legacy from the Cross was peace. The desires of the soul can be wisely directed, only towards Him. So of old, the solitary dove, sent out by Noah, as you recollect, could find no rest for the sole of her foot on the surface of the still prevailing waters, and winged her flight back to the ark. The refuge of which this is the image speaks of the highest kind of rest among creatures. But there is a higher example of rest-seeking than is given by the soul of man. The text speaks of God being at rest. There is something the Infinite Father is seeking after, which He obtains and will obtain, and having reached it, is still with unutterable satisfaction. He says of it, "This is my rest, here will I stay, for I have desired it."

The other clause of the text has the same thought in it, but differently expressed. It is not now rest that is the word for satisfaction, but shouting and song. Yet the meaning is the same. The second part of the verse, like the first, tells us of the happiness of God. He is spoken of as abundantly blessed. He has no more to wish. He rejoices in the fulfilment of all his heart's purposes. Happy beings sing forth the happiness they feel according to their nature. Take, for example, the song of birds—the lark's morning carol, up in the sky, or the blackbird's note in the brake. Have you not felt sure, as you walked out into the fields, on a summer's day, and heard the chirp, and whistle, and warble of various feathered creatures from the woods around that there were happy little hearts speaking out in these voices? When you hear children singing, you conclude that they are merry and joyous. Were they not so, on that wondrous day of our Lord's earthly triumph, when they sang hosannas in the Temple, and won the Master's gracious smile? Would it not be grand, and show great prosperity, if a whole nation should raise a joint song? It was done once. The shores of the Red Sea heard a people sing a psalm of victory, when the waves were closing over the shriek and wail of their wicked pursuers. Oh, how glad and

grateful were Israel's hearts that day! What would it be to hear Angels' songs? They sing, too, on grand occasions. They sang together, and shouted joyfully, when the foundations of the earth were laid. It was a concert of the morning stars at the world's birth. They sang together, and we know what the strain was, when Jesus was born: night and the shepherds heard them say, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, goodwill to men." I think they sang when Jesus went up from Olivet to glory. And surely they will sing again, when the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy on their heads. These are high examples of happiness, uttering itself in singing. But now, what think ye must be the happiness which God expresses in songs? If God sing, what must His joy of heart be!

To show how deepest satisfaction may show itself in silent rest, and in songs of joy, let me set before you two pictures. One is of a mother with her babe on her knee. The child is lying with upturned face, gazing with eyes that have but lately learned to see, into the countenance of love bent over it. The mother's eye drinks in the sweet draught of the child's happiness and trust, and rains down, not in tears but glances of delight, its own glowing affection. She speaks not a word, but is full of satisfaction. She rests in her love. See, on the other hand, how the father in the parable receives his long-lost child. "Bring forth the best robe," he cried to his servants, "and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf and kill it; and let us eat and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." He rejoices over his restored child with singing.

The inquiry which I now wish to answer is, from what does God's satisfaction and joy arise? How is His rest connected with His saved people? I remark—

I. God is not satisfied with doing nothing.—Think back on a time when all the things that now are, had not yet been made. There were no living creatures; no men, no beasts, no birds, nor creeping things on earth; no Angels in the skies. There were no worlds for living creatures to dwell in; no Heaven, no sun, no moon, no star, no globe like ours—nothing. Then, however, there was God—God alone. And, doubtless even then God was happy. But He was not satisfied in the sense of the text. He was at rest, silent in His blessedness, but not satisfied. There was something He wished to do. He longed to work. He arose, and created. Having created, He continues to preserve. He is taking care of the universe every day. Hence our Lord Jesus said to the Jews, "My Father worketh hitherto," from creation till now, even on the Sabbath of rest. The old heathens could not imagine that their gods could be happy unless removed from the affairs of men. They supposed them to dwell far up above the clouds on a high mountain-top, minding their own pleasures, and letting the world look after itself, except on some great occasions which called them to leave their lofty seats, and come down to human abodes; just as there have been wicked kings who lived in their own palaces, and followed their own delights, leaving their subjects to fare as they might. But our God is not as the gods of the blind nations. He must watch over the interests of His great creation. He does not overlook the smallest part of it, nor the meanest thing in it. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without Him. He takes care of the world; His eye is always on it; His hand is always upholding it. I once saw what I felt to be a very daring picture. There was a majestic figure representing God, or the Son of God. In the open hand, of which the very fingers seemed full of strength, rested a globe. The meaning was, God bears up this great world,

as in His hand. I did not like the way in which the lesson was told, but the lesson is true. He upholdeth all things by the word of His power. But—

II. God is not satisfied with mere Works of Power and Wisdom.—Did you ever see an orrery? You know it is a skilfully constructed machine designed to represent the movements of the planets around the sun. If you have seen one, you must have felt, as you looked at it, that it required much wisdom to contrive and arrange it. But, after all, it was but an imitation of what God does with the real globes, and what He contrived without anyone to show Him the plan. God made all the planets, put them in their places, gave them their motions, and made them fit into each other, so that we have a system, and not a maze of chance. In this world, too, he made all things to answer each other. The Greek and the Latin words for world show what observers long ago thought of the appearance of things around us. They signify orderly, well-arranged, beautiful. The world is indeed all this. Look at hills, valleys, seas; at grass, flowers, trees; think of air, clouds, rains; consider how they are adapted to each other, hills to valleys, herbage to both, rain to all, how useful and at the same time how beautiful they are—and then say, Was not David right, when he exclaimed, "How manifold are Thy works, O Lord, in wisdom Thou hast made them all!" Have you ever thought what wisdom and skill to make things fitting and beautiful, there are shown in the seasons—spring, summer, autumn, winter? The poet Thomson speaks truly when in a hymn addressed to God, he says, "The rolling year is full of Thee." Now, when God made all these things wisely and beautifully, they were pleasing to Him. He liked to look at them. But He could not rest in them. Otherwise He might have stopped His creating work on the fourth day.

III. God is not satisfied with mere Works of Goodness and Bounty.—After the fourth day God made living sentient creatures. All of these were capable of feeling pleasure, and enjoying happiness after their kind. He made a great many sorts of them. He made some to fly about in the air, some to roam about on the land, some to swim through the waters of rivers, and lakes, and seas. Have not you seen birds and beasts quite evidently happy? You have found it pleasant, have you not, to look at lambs or other young animals frisking and gambolling about? Now, doubtless, it gave God pleasure to make such creatures, and to see them happy. Besides, he had made Angels before who should be able to know, and love, and serve Him. He made man, also, rational and capable of seeing His glory, and speaking of it. In the happiness of Angels and men He has great delight. He likes to hear their voices, and to see their works. It is very pleasant to Him to talk with them. Just as the father of a family, sitting in the midst of his children, likes to hear them asking questions, and thanking him for his care; likes to see them growing in knowledge and loving one another, so God has pleasure in the joys and services of holy Angels and men. You recollect that when God had finished his six days' work He beheld, and lo, all was good; and then He rested on the seventh day. He was thus far satisfied. He rejoiced over a holy unfallen world. But He had a deeper happiness, a fuller rest, than even this. The highest Sabbath was not yet.

IV. God is not satisfied with Works of Justice and Judgment.—After God had made the Angels, a number of them sinned, and He cast them out of Heaven. When Adam sinned, He drove him forth from Paradise. He has said that He will banish wicked men from His presence and the glory of His power. He has often brought destruction on vile and bad men in this world. He drowned the whole race once for their iniquity, saving only Noah

and his family. He rained fire and brimstone, in awful storm, on the cities of the plain. He brought the waters of the Red Sea on the host of Pharaoh, when with hardened hearts they pursued the people of Israel. He destroyed Jerusalem, after it rejected Jesus, with a very terrible overthrow. Now, there is a satisfaction to God in thus visiting sin with its due punishment. In a passage of one of the prophets He speaks of great judgments as being a sacrifice, satisfying His justice. But this is not the rest of delight. It is the rest merely of relief. It is ease from a burden. God uses this very way of speaking Himself. He says in Isaiah, "Ah! I will ease Me of Mine adversaries." The history and condition of the Jewish people may be adduced to illustrate this. God has thrown them off for their rejection of His Son, as a load He could no longer bear. But He has not yet done with them. Relieved from them, He yet remembers them. He will by and by rest in His love over them, bringing them back with songs of joy. This brings me to remark—

V. God is satisfied with Works of Love and Mercy.—He will save, says the text. Then He will rest. Of old He called the land of Canaan His rest, because He there finished His work of leading Israel out of the house of bondage, and through the wilderness, into promised habitations. The earthly was but a shadow of the Heavenly. God now rests in Christ, rests in the Church, will rest in the Church brought home to glory. For then will His work of love and mercy be completed. Now, it is not wonderful that the work of redemption should give the highest joy to God. For it shows all His character that is shown elsewhere—wisdom, power, justice, goodness, truth; and it shows something more. It shows His pity, and His mercy towards the unworthy and the lost. You remember how this idea of God's chief joy in saving is set forth to us in the parables recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Luke. The shepherd, coming back with the strayed sheep on his shoulder, is gladder over the restored one than over the safe ninety-nine. The woman, finding the lost silver-piece, must have her neighbours to rejoice with her over the recovery. The father, receiving back his poor lost son, makes a feast for joy of soul. When old Jacob met his son Joseph, after he had long mourned him as dead, do not you think he would be gladder over him, than when he was first born to him, the child of his beloved Rachel? When the Shunammite mother got her dead boy back again to her embrace, alive and well, how must her heart have leapt for fullest joy! I recollect reading a story somewhere how a little babe laid on a flowery bank by a boy-brother, to whose care it had been given, was seen by an eagle, that swiftly stooped from her high flight, and carried it away to her eyry in the rocks. The shrieks and anguish of the poor mother, when she heard of the theft of her darling, roused the country-side, and strong men ran in haste to climb the mountain-side, and search the cliff, if haply the infant might be saved from being devoured. The little boy, whose intermitted watch had given the bird of prey her opportunity, was lowered from the top of the rock to where the nest of the eagle was made, and found his lost sister yet safe among the eaglets. The child was brought back with shouts of joy, and as the mother once more clasped her infant safe, she drew from a deeper well of gladness than she ever knew before. Our Heavenly Father, in like manner, rejoices over the saved. Nor will He rest, till the salvation of His Church is complete, and His children are all and altogether blessed.

In closing let me first ask you this question, Is God, think ye, singing over you? Have you given Him occasion for rejoicing? You were lost, are ye found? Do not think that you are too little to be the objects of His care, and pleasure, and joy. It is not the will of your Father in Heaven that one

of these little ones should perish. The Good Shepherd will not overlook a lamb in all His flock. Great and little make no difference to God—or if they do, He loves the least the most. He perfects His praise from the lips of babes. Let me illustrate this by a parable. I went out into the fields on a winter's day, when the sun, though low, was shining in the clear heavens. All was dead and bare around me; yet as I listened, I heard the bright sun up in the heavens singing a happy song. What, I said, O sun, can there be in this bleak landscape to gladden thine eye and cheer thy heart? I sing, he answered, over the worlds that are rolling around me, clothed with my light, and filled with my heat. Ah! I thought, well may he be happy that can bless worlds. I went out again into the fields on a sweet spring morning, and as the sun came up from the east I heard him singing once more—but the notes were sweeter and more joyous; soft, tender, gladsome, I questioned him as to the change, and he said, I sing now for the flowers that are coming up at your feet, and opening their cups to be filled with my golden beams. They were dead, and are now living again—and every one of them is dear to me, because they live in my light, and bask in my warmth. Ah! I said, wondrous sun, that can enlighten worlds, and rejoice over a daisy.

See, further, from our theme to-day, what should satisfy us, and set us singing for gladness. Opportunities of doing good, and hearts to embrace them, works of kindness and love—these are the things for gladdening the soul. To make others happy is to make ourselves happy also. This is to help God in His great work. This is to enter into His rest.

One word more. If God rest in His love towards us, what a refuge must His love be to us. With that let our souls be satisfied for ever and ever.

—*Rev. J. Edmond, D.D.*

Anecdotes and Illustrations

The Armour of Peace.—He that has peace with God is armed cap-à-pie: he is covered from head to foot in a panoply. The arrow may fly against it, but it cannot pierce it; for peace with God is a mail so strong, that the broadsword of Satan itself may be broken in twain ere it can pierce the flesh. Oh! take care that you are at peace with God; for if you are not, you ride forth to to-morrow's fight unarmed, naked; and God help the man that is unarmed when he has to fight with hell and earth.

Peace in Death.—Joseph Addison, the renowned author and linguist, after enduring much physical suffering with fortitude, sent for the young, but dissipated Lord Warwick. He came and said to Addison, "Dear Sir, you sent for me. I believe and hope you have some commands. I shall hold them most dear." "See," said the dying saint, "in what peace a Christian can die!" and breathed his life out like a sleeping child.

The Enemies of Peace.—Five great enemies to peace inhabit with us, viz. avarice, ambition, envy, anger and pride; and if these enemies were to be banished, we should infallibly enjoy perpetual peace.—*Petrarch.*

Cæsar in the Storm.—History tells us that Julius Cæsar was at sea in a little boat when a terrible storm came on. He sought to inspire the courage of his men who plied the oars by telling them that their little boat bore Cæsar and his fortunes. Let us be encouraged by feeling that if we are genuine disciples, Jesus is on board the barque of our being, voyaging with us on the mighty sea of existence. He holds the helm in His hand, and winds and waves obey His voice.

God's Peace.—The child frightened in his play runs to seek his mother.

She takes him upon her lap, and presses his head to her bosom; and, with tenderest words of love, she looks down upon him, and smooths his hair, and kisses his cheek, and wipes away his tears. And then, in a low and gentle voice, she sings some sweet descant, some lullaby of love; and the fear fades out from his face, and a smile of satisfaction plays over it, and at length his eyes close, and he sleeps in the deep depths and delights of peace. God Almighty is the mother, and the soul is the tired child; and He folds it in His arms, and dispels its fear, and lulls it to repose, saying, "Sleep my darling, sleep! It is I, Who watch thee." He "giveth His beloved sleep." The mother's arms encircle but one; but God clasps every yearning soul to His bosom, and gives to it the peace which passeth understanding, beyond the reach of care or storm.—*Beecher.*

Questions on the Collect

1. To whom is this Collect addressed? 2. How does it describe God? 3. What do we mean by everlasting? 4. What do we pray for in this Collect? 5. How did Jesus show His disciples that He ordered all things? 6. What is peace? 7. What is the opposite of peace? 8. What is the last blessing we take away with us from Church? 9. Repeat it.

The Gospel

St John ii. 1-11

The First Miracle

"*This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee.*"—*St John ii.* 11.

On the third day after our Lord Jesus had spoken to Nathanael, and made him one of His disciples, there was a marriage in a little town called Cana of Galilee; and I suppose that the mother of Jesus was a relation to the family, for she was present, and sometimes directed the servants what to do. Jesus and His disciples were also invited. Before the feast had ended, all the wine which was provided for the guests had been used, and Mary, knowing the wonderful power of her Son, told Him of this. She expected that He would work a miracle immediately in order to supply the want; but He answered her, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." He meant to show her that her control over Him only extended to His human nature. When He did anything as God, she had no right or no authority to direct Him; when the proper time came, He would act as was just and wise.

Mary spoke to the servants and told them to do whatever Jesus might tell them. There were six vessels made of stone for holding water standing near by. They held altogether about a hogshead, and were employed in the various washings or purifyings ordered by the law of Moses to the Jews. Jesus told the servants to fill these vessels with water, and they filled them up to the brim. Then, He said, "Draw out now and bear unto the governor of the feast." This was a person whose business was to regulate the whole ceremonial and keep everything in order. The servants brought him a draught from the newly-filled vessels; the water they had just poured in had become wine. He was surprised at the goodness of it; and not knowing

whence it came, he called the bridegroom, and said that the usual custom was to give the best wine at first, and keep the inferior sort till afterwards; "But you," added he, "have kept the good wine until now."

This was the first miracle which Jesus performed, and by it He showed forth His glory; that is, He proved Himself no common man, but God, having great power. His disciples believed that He was the Messiah, when they saw such a proof that He could make the natural things of the world obey him.

The First Miracle in Cana

"*And manifested forth His glory.*"—*St John ii.* 11.

I. Introduction.—Recall Jesus from the town of Nazareth going down south and beyond Jordan to preacher John to be baptised. Why? What did He then learn? Getting a few disciples, He returned to Galilee, but not to settle in His home in Nazareth. Why not? He went about preaching and took His disciples with Him. Why?

II. The Mother of Jesus.—She had always known there was something remarkable about this Son of hers; He was different from His brothers and sisters, and she was always wondering what strange things God might have for Him to do. Some friends of hers lived at a village a little way from Nazareth (five or six miles), and as there was a wedding in the family Mary and Jesus, and also His disciples, were invited to the feast.

III. A Wedding Party.—Explain that the people among whom Jesus lived made great ado over weddings—all friends and relations and many beside invited. Much feasting and merriment kept up for a week. Do you think Jesus cared for the eating and drinking, the music and the dancing? Yet He joined the party to show that He cares for our joys and pleasures as well as for our sorrows and pains.

Mary was watching her Son, and on one of the days she said to Him: "They have no more wine" (exp. that wine, the real juice of the grape, such as we do not get in this country, was the usual drink of the people). We do not know *why* Mary should tell Jesus unless she had some thought that He could help her friends out of the difficulty. Jesus did not say at once "I will help them, I will go and get them some wine," but said it was not yet the right time for Him to interfere. But His mother knew that she need not be anxious, He would do what He wished to do when the right time came.

IV. The Miracle.—At last Jesus spoke. "Fill those water-pots with water." (Describe row of stoneware vases, or open jars, placed outside for the convenience of washing hands, which the Jews were very careful to do before and after meals.) The servants filled the jars up to the brim. But of what use was water when wine was wanted? They did not ask any questions. And Jesus said, "Draw it out and carry some to the governor of the feast." And when the governor of the feast came to taste the liquid, he did not say: "Why do you bring me water?" Oh, no; for it was no longer *water*, it was *wine*, and such good wine that he wondered where it had come from. So he went to the bridegroom and said: "Most people pass round the good wine first, and give the worst last, but you have kept your best wine till now."

This is a beautiful and wonderful story about the first wonderful sign (miracle) that Jesus worked. Why? First, to make people happy; and, second, to show His disciples and others that God had sent Him.

We see that Jesus likes people to be happy. There is nothing wrong in enjoying ourselves in a right and sensible way. But do you think that Jesus

gave the people wine in order that they might become intoxicated. We are quite sure He did not. We know that the people had then no tea, nor coffee, nor cocoa to drink, they pressed the juice from their own grapes and drank the wine so made—everything was different from things in our day. We are quite sure Jesus would not have set before His countrymen and countrywomen large quantities of the strong drink *we* call wine, and wished them to drink it. And we must always do what we think Jesus would like us to do if He were here with us *now*.

The Wonderful Wedding

"*And both Jesus was called, and His disciples, to the wedding.*"—*St John ii.* 2.

Among the millions of joyous weddings celebrated during the world's history, in every land and nation, one humble marriage feast in an Eastern village stands out crowned with a rose-wreath of immortal joy. At Cana alone a Divine Guest was present in visible form, and at Cana alone the Christ Himself bestowed on the bride and bridegroom and their friends a wonderful gift in a wonderful manner. Looking back on that pleasant scene through the vista of nineteen centuries, we can imagine the flat-roofed cottage, the vines mantling its walls, the merry guests in their bright-coloured robes and turbans, the waterpots decked with bunches of green leaves. Let us mark that one gentle form among the bridal party, and learn some of the lessons taught us by His words and actions on this His first public appearance as a Rabbi.

I. In the midst of the music and singing, the laughter and gaiety, a whisper causing dismay and consternation passes round among the servants. It reaches the ears of the Virgin Mary, bringing anxiety and distress to her sympathetic heart. Immediately, however, her face brightens when she remembers that the Son Who has been her unfailing helper during many years of widowhood —the Son over Whose birth hangs such awful mystery, and concerning Whose future Angels have foretold so many marvels—is present. She can appeal to Him as she has done dozens of times before, and, no doubt, He will find a way out of the difficulty, as He has always done before in the little cares and perplexities which have beset the family of the carpenter Joseph. "They have no wine left," she whispers, and, though her Son gently calms her excited eagerness by a few words of caution, Mary at once turns gladly to the bewildered servants with the order that Jesus' commands when issued are to be implicitly obeyed. At once we perceive the *helpfulness* which must have adorned the character of Christ in His cottage home at Nazareth. What an example for all Christians to imitate! To whom do we turn instinctively in troubles and emergencies? Surely, to those who have proved already their love and sympathy for us in similar crises. George Herbert, in his own quaint way, points the moral for us:

> "Be useful where thou livest, that they may
> Both want and wish thy pleasing presence still—
> Kindness, good parts, great places, are the way
> To compass this. Find out men's wants and will,
> And meet them there!—All worldly joys go less
> To the one joy of doing kindnessess."

II. Jesus does not long delay before relieving His mother's anxiety, and now we notice the *simplicity* of the means which He uses to accomplish His purpose. There, close by, stand the stone jars, almost empty now after the ablutions of the crowd of guests. There is plenty of water in the well, how-

ever, and the Master orders the attendants to fill the vessels with the simplest of all beverages. They do so, and lo! when they draw it out again it is transformed into pure and sparkling wine! A few months later the Lord will take five little barley loaves and two small fishes from a country lad, and with these provide a plentiful picnic-meal for thousands of weary men, women and children. There is nothing far-fetched, ostentatious or elaborate in Christ's methods. How different are they from the sensational means employed at the present day for relieving want or attracting the masses to religion. In this point, too, we need to go back to the Founder of Christianity.

The story of Gaspar Becerra illustrates the moral here. In vain had he attempted to carve a beautiful image out of the precious wood brought from "a distant Eastern island," and at last gave up the endeavour in despair. Suddenly, however, a voice bade him seize the log burning before him on the hearth and use that for his purpose. He did so, and fixed his ideal in the common oak of his native land.

> "O thou sculptor, painter, poet,
> Take this lesson to thy heart:
> *That is best which lieth nearest*;
> Shape from *that* thy word of art."

"Here in this miserable, despicable Actual, wherein thou even now standest," says the Sage of Chelsea, "here or nowhere is thy Ideal! Work it out therefrom!"

III. Lastly, observe the *lavishness* of Jesus' liberality. At the lowest computation He created over a hundred gallons of the exhilarating beverage. There is no niggardliness in God's gifts. The waterpots at Cana are filled "up to the brim." "The cup" of a Christian's mercies "runneth over." In nature and in grace alike God is "able to do *exceeding abundantly* above all that we ask or think." Alas for us if we *abuse* the innocent gifts which are showered upon us so whole-heartedly by our Heavenly Father, by lack of self-control or selfishness! Alas for us if we *refuse* the full "cup of salvation" offered to us! Alas if we are mean and stingy towards others, forgetting that "God loveth a cheerful giver"!

> "Give all thou canst; high Heaven rejects the lore
> Of nicely-calculated less or more."

Thus, lovingly, simply and generously did Jesus begin His great work in the Holy Land. Again and again did He use the wedding feast as a type of the Kingdom He had come to establish. At all true marriages He is still the dearest Guest. He spreads for all men a banquet of overflowing joy even on this sin-stained earth, and who can even imagine the wondrous gladness and love of the marriage supper of the Lamb in the golden halls of Heaven?

How to make Home Happy

"*Even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.*"
—*St Mark x.* 45.

I should like to do something, dear children, if I could, to make home happy, and that is one reason why I have taken this verse for this afternoon. Supposing that a stranger had come into Folkestone for the first time last Tuesday; as the train passed over the viaduct and he looked out of the carriage window, he might have thought what a dull place it was. For you know the wind was tremendous that day; the rain was coming down in torrents, the streets were wet and muddy, and when he got to his lodgings he would

probably wish himself home again. But how different it was last Monday! The sea was smooth and glassy, the sky was blue overhead; everybody looked cheerful and in a good humour; it was just the weather that made all the difference in the look of the town on Monday and Tuesday. And so it will be with your homes; if you want to be ministered unto, to be waited on, petted, and to have your own way, home will be often very dull. But if, like the Lord Jesus, you wish "not to be ministered unto, but to minister"; then it will be to you like the blue sky and the bright sun overhead; and that home will be peaceful and happy.

And then, secondly, I want to make every little boy and girl feel as happy as the day is long; and I know they might be happy, I know there need hardly ever be any tears on their rosy cheeks: my text tells you the way to be happy and cheerful. Perhaps there is someone here who thinks, "I hope I shall grow up to be a man; I hope I shall live to be seventy or eighty years old; I should be dreadfully afraid to die; for besides that I should not like to say good-bye to my dear father and mother and brothers and sisters, and die alone; I am so afraid that, perhaps, I should go to hell for ever." O! my dear children, I hardly ever want to speak about that dreadful place; I would rather follow the example which Jesus Christ has set me, and speak more about Heaven. Jesus Christ loves you; He does not like to see you frightened; He would not have you afraid of Him. If you will think of the Lord Jesus more, ask Him to forgive you whenever you do wrong, and try to be like Him, you will soon be very happy. My text says, "For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many"; and if you will only follow the example which Jesus has set you, and from morning till night try to make other people happy, then, if it should please God to call you away from this world, you would not be in the least afraid. Your father and mother, perhaps, would be standing and crying by your bedside; but you would put up your hand to wipe away the tears; and, smiling up into their faces, you would be able to say, "You must not cry, for Jesus is coming for me, and, O, I am so happy!" Yes, my children, above all I want to make you like the Lord Jesus, and so to make His heart glad; I am sure I should not have a Children's Service every month, but that I hope to help some dear children to know and love their Saviour.

Now, it may seem to you that I am making a great deal out of a very little; that I am going to preach a sermon about a very little matter. But the truth is that the Bible makes much of little things—as little sins, little acts of kindness, and little children themselves. There is a text which says, "The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks"; and there is another verse which says, "Take us the foxes, the little foxes which spoil the vines." It is just these little things which help to make you good or bad. And I think it should make us so happy to feel that the Lord Jesus thinks so much of little kindnesses, which men and women, perhaps, would hardly notice. For He said to His disciples, "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward"; and He tells us that at the last day He will say to those on the right hand, "Insomuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of My brethren, ye have it unto Me."

I dare say that you have often wished that there was more written about what Jesus did and said when He was a little Boy. You like your father to tell you what he used to do when he was young; and so you would like to know what the Lord Jesus was like when He was as small as you. This

we are not told; we read "And the Child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon Him." "And He went down with Joseph and Mary, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them; and Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man"; and that is all. But it is quite enough for us to see from it that the Lord Jesus was the most gentle, most obedient, most kind little Boy that ever lived. And when He became a Man, and went out into the world, oh, then, what a beautiful life His is seen to be! Jesus Christ was King of kings and Lord of lords; He was greater than Cæsar, the Roman emperor; He was the very Son of God, God, equal with the Father. But we read, "He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." Though He was so great, He did not try and make everyone feel it; He did not walk about proudly, keep people at a distance from Him, live in a grand palace, and have servants to wait upon Him. Oh, no; as He was born in a stable, so He never had anywhere to lay His head; He was as poor as the very poorest; in short, He never thought about Himself. He went about simply doing good; no matter how tired He was, He was always ready to help when He was wanted; and this was so plainly to be seen by everyone that He could say, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." We even read, "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God, He riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself. After that He poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded." The great Son of God lived for other people, and not for Himself; as His one thought was how to make other people happy and do them good; so, as He says here, He "gave His life a ransom for many"; there was no other way in which man's debt of sin could be paid; and that sinners might not be lost, that they might be happy for ever in Heaven, He laid down His life for the sheep. And you might say—since He never thought of Himself, since His one thought was to be kind to others—you might say that from the moment He was born He began to give His life for other people. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ is both God and Man: as a Man He grew up as you may do; and continually doing the lesser acts of kindness, continually trying to make other people happy; never thinking of Himself, no doubt He was the more ready to "give His life a ransom for many"; and it was easier for Him to do it. There is the example, dear children, which the Lord Jesus has given us; and this is what I want to put before you this afternoon.

Well then, you see I want you to try and think less about yourselves. "Even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister"; and I want each of you, boys and girls, to make up your mind to be kind to others, and to wait upon them. Then I am sure you little people do not in the least know how much the happiness of home depends upon you; you do not think how much your parents are always thinking about you. The mother almost lives for her children; you are never out of your parents' thoughts from morning till night; and do not you see that if you are gentle and kind, and thoughtful for others, you will make your parents much happier; and everything will go on at home so much more smoothly and pleasantly. Supposing, for instance, there are a number of children at home; and some game is started; if everyone thinks of himself; if each one wants to have the best place and to be captain of the game, of course there will be sure to be quarrels: one will turn sulky, another will be disagreeable, and no

one will enjoy himself. Then, I would say, when next you are inclined to put yourself forward, and you find that someone else wants the same thing, remember how Jesus loves you, how He died for you, how He has set you an Example, and how it will please Him to see you following it; just remember this little verse, and you will give up at once.

Let me try and describe to you what I shall call the right way of going on at home. Mary and Charlotte are two little girls at home; they have kind, good parents, who do everything to make them happy; who teach them every day about the Lord Jesus, and pray for them night and morning that they may be the disciples of the Master. It is a fine bright morning, and the time has come to get up. They both kneel down and say their prayers, and then begin to dress. Mary is very anxious to get on with her lessons before breakfast, because there are some little cousins coming to play with them in the afternoon, and they would like their lessons to be over by that time. Mary is dressed first, and is hurrying out of the room, when Charlotte cries out, "O this tiresome string, it has got into a knot, and I shall never undo it." Mary has just been praying, "O Lord Jesus, make me kind and gentle to my brothers and sisters." She remembers this prayer; she comes back at once to her sister's side; and after trying patiently for five minutes, the tiresome knot is undone, and they go downstairs together. That was one little act of kindness, and the Lord Jesus has put it down in His book of remembrance. At breakfast they generally have one piece of toast each; that is when no one is staying at the house; but this morning there is only one piece left in the rack; Mary is just going to take it, she being the eldest; but seeing Charlotte's look of disappointment, and remembering the words, "Even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister," she gives it up at once to her sister, and takes bread and butter instead. A second act of kindness; and she feels that the dear Saviour is smiling on her.

After breakfast the lesson-books are brought out, and they go on with their work till twelve o'clock. As soon as the clock strikes twelve both the little girls jump down from their chairs, and Charlotte rushes out of the room. Now, it is always their mother's rule that the lesson-books should be put away before they begin to play. Mary is tempted to feel cross that Charlotte has left her alone; and she has half a mind to run away too, or to go and complain to her mother. But she recollects that her mother has much to make her anxious, she recollects the verse of my text, and she quietly sets to work, and puts everything in its place. Just as it is finished, her elder brother, Tom, rushes in, and calls out to his sister to sew a button on his coat for him; and it must be done at once, or he will be too late to join the other boys at football. Mary takes the coat at once; it is rather rough work for her little fingers; but she will not disappoint her brother; and so, taking her work-basket, and finding some black thread, she sews the button neatly on. Her brother, who is always very proud of her, and has often called her his neat little woman, stoops to kiss her before he runs off, and tells her she is a good, kind little sister; and there is a gladness in Mary's heart which makes her sing as she goes up to change her frock before dinner.

In the afternoon, their cousins come as expected; and as by this time the sky has become dark and cloudy, it is thought better they should stay and play in the house. But hark! there is a sound of a pipe and drum in the distance, and the children exclaim in one breath that it is "Punch and Judy." Their father has heard it also, and he lays down his pen, and comes out of his study, and as the man is passing the house he calls to him and gives him half-a-crown that the children may see his show. And now, there is a row of

bright faces gathered at the window; the show is set up, and while the man inside is getting everything ready, his companion begins to play a lively tune. Mary has got an excellent place, and is eagerly looking to see the curtain drawn up. But just then she hears a cry behind her, and looking round she sees her tiny brother, and he says, "Please, sister, let me come and see Mr Punch." Mary at once gives up her place; she has to stand where she cannot see nearly so well; but as she hears her little brother's merry laugh, and sees him clap his hands again and again, her heart leaps for joy; and hush! a voice is whispering in her ear—a voice she knows so well, and no one else heard it; the Lord Jesus is saying to her, "My child, thou hast done this for Me; I love thee for this; 'inasmuch as thou hast done in unto one of the least of these My brethren, thou hast done it unto Me'; dear Mary, I will not forget it." And when Mary kneels by her bedside that night, O how does her heart feel light and happy! and as she lies down to sleep she feels as if the arms of Jesus were about her. The next morning her mother comes to call her; everything is still and quiet; and when her mother draws aside the curtain she sees a sweet smile resting upon the face of her dead child. He who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister" has called home to Paradise this little lamb; and at that very moment a bright Angel is bearing away her happy spirit to the land of rest and peace.

Well now, I have taken this verse partly because I think it may be useful to you just at this time. The holidays are fast coming on; every morning each little boy and girl at school thinks, "One day nearer the holidays! only ten, twelve, or fourteen days more, and I shall be once more at home!" And the teachers do not mind that the children are so glad to go home; for they know that school can never be quite like home; they know that when the young people have grown up they will look back and think gratefully of those who took so much pains with them. But what will the holidays be like? We all hope that this Christmas will even be happier than the last; but many pleasures that are nice to look forward to, disappoint us when they come. And I have taken this text this afternoon, because, if you follow the advice which the Lord here gives you, you can make sure of being happy.

Now, when the children all get together, every one cannot have the best thing, the middle ornament off the Twelfth-cake, or the prettiest thing off the Christmas tree. And if you all set your hearts upon these things, and make up your minds that you cannot be happy without them, of course a great many people must be disappointed and unhappy. Your kind parents, I dare say, have been planning Christmas pleasures, Christmas parties, and Christmas presents for weeks past; and when there are a great many children to provide for, it is not at all easy to know what will make each child happy. Now, when the Christmas presents are given, if you see that somebody else has what you would have liked better than what has been given to you, do not pout, or look cross; do not feel envious, and make yourself disagreeable. But think of all the money that has been spent upon you, all the pains that your kind parents have taken to give you pleasure; remember, "Even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister," and try to be contented and cheerful.

Then, wet days are very trying in the holidays; and parents very often do not know what to do to make the time go pleasantly. Do not say, when anything is suggested, "Oh! I do not want to do this," "I do not care about that," and, "this, or that, is very stupid." It may be rather disappointing that the snow thaws as soon as it comes down, and you cannot get out to make a snow-man; and just when you have set your heart upon skating, very likely the ice breaks up. But if your mother puts away her work and

proposes to read an interesting story, or if your father puts off his work till the evening when you are gone to bed, and offers to come and play with you, then, though it is not what you would have chosen, and it is not what you like best, think how kind it is of your parents to try and please you; see how they do not think at all about themselves, and show you feel it by cheerfully coming into their plans.

Then there are a hundred little kindnesses you may do for grown-up people. The elder girls can try and amuse the baby when he is cross, and so be a great help to the mother. Your father, perhaps, has to go out in the wet, and will come home cold and tired; you can put his slippers ready for him, and be ready to meet him with a bright smiling face. Jesus "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." He Who might have commanded thousands and thousands of Angels to wait upon Him was always ministering to, that is, waiting upon, other people; and this it is which makes us love Him. O my children, if you are loving and unselfish, then you will get so much more love; then the holidays will go so smoothly, so happily, and the tear will stand in the father's eye when the time comes for the boy to leave home and he puts him in the train; and the little ones will be so sad, and feel quite dull when the elder ones are gone back to school.

If you have never tried, you will have no idea of the pleasure that it is to make others happy. There are a hundred little ways every day in which we may minister to the wants of others; or if you look out for them these holidays, you will find many little things which you may do for your parents. We cannot always be finding new pleasures for ourselves; and although our Father in Heaven rejoices to see us thankful and happy, He did not send us into the world to live that we may please ourselves. However old you may live to be, you may always be making someone happy; and many a person who is ill, and laid up in a sick-room, perhaps for years, finds a sweet pleasure in making some little comforts for the poor; and so, when the time has come when she must be ministered unto, she still does not forget to minister.

And it is by acting unselfishly, and taking pains to think of others, that you will become less selfish. And as the Lord Jesus thus speaks of His life; so, if you follow in His footsteps, and try to be like Him, you will grow better, because you will even grow like unto the Lord Jesus Himself; and there is not a more beautiful sight in the world, than a little boy, or a little girl, who is like the Lord Jesus Christ. So here is the work which He has given to everyone, however young and however poor. There is nothing too small for the Lord Jesus to notice; the tiniest thing that is done in order to please Him, He loves to notice and will never forget it. Oh! my children, try and think of this; for nothing, I am sure, will make you so much wish to do what is right. Every morning, as soon as you open your eyes, you may do something to please the Lord Jesus, by trying to be kind to somebody, and by not thinking of yourselves. And if you do this, if because you wish to please the Saviour, Who died for you, you are always looking out for opportunities of being kind; if you are ready to help the little ones, and to wait upon grown-up people; then the Lord Jesus will take away from you all foolish fears of death. It is only the wilful and the wicked who should be afraid to die; the children who are the friends of Jesus should be able to sing—

"There's a home for little children
Above the bright blue sky,
Where Jesus reigns in glory—
A home of peace and joy;

No home on earth is like it,
Nor can with it compare,
For every one is happy,
Nor can be happier there."

And so, pleasing the Lord Jesus, and learning to love Him, you will be quite ready to go home whenever Jesus shall come to fetch you; and instead of the fear of death, there will be the bright hope of entering Heaven, a hope growing stronger and brighter every day.—*Rev. Claude Bosanquet, M.A.*

The First Miracle

"Whatsoever He saith unto you do it."—St John ii. 5.

I. Christ Works Miracles with the ease of a Master.—He stands in a peculiar relation to nature. "All things came into being through Him." All created things are materialised by His will. His will could change in the wilderness stones into bread, had He so willed; but that would have been only for Himself, and He never would work a miracle for Himself, however easy it was to Him. His will could change water into wine, and, as it would give such joy to others, He did so, without even touching the wine. The wonder is not that Christ worked miracles. Being what He was, it would have been very wonderful if He did not. It is practice that makes the magician skilful (give examples), but Christ needed no practice. He was at the secret source of every living thing. He cursed the fig-tree, and it withered; He spake, and Lazarus rose from the dead.

II. Christ Sanctifies true earthly Joys.—By His presence and miracle He sanctified marriage and social joys. He had come straight from the wilderness, where He had been fasting and praying. But He was not ascetic like John the Baptist. He did not abstain from all pleasures. He even feasted with publicans and sinners, thereby shocking the Pharisees. And yet we can never imagine Jesus self-indulgent. However often He hallowed the pleasures of men, He never encouraged excess.

To live for pleasure is selfish and sinful, and to this Jesus never gave countenance. Enjoyment of friendship He not only approved of, but also blessed. Any pleasure over which you cannot conscientiously say "grace" is sinful. (Apply to games, sports, entertainments, festivities, etc.) Remove from your scholars' minds the false and misleading distinction between things sacred and secular. All secular things in which we can ask the presence of Christ are sacred. In what way this lesson is related to the Temperance question, the following words will suggest—

"To relinquish a wrong is praiseworthy, but to yield up a personal right for benevolent purposes is far more admirable. There have not been many spectacles since the coming of Christ of equal moral impressiveness with the example of millions of Christian men in both hemispheres cheerfully and enthusiastically giving up the use of intoxicating drink, that by their example they might restrain or win those who were in danger of ruinous temptation. Had Jesus, living in our time, beheld the wide waste and wretchedness arising from inordinate appetites, can anyone doubt on which side He would be found?"

III. Whatsoever He Saith unto you do It.—Christ can only work miracles of transformation in our characters if we promptly and constantly obey Him. Those servants at the wedding did whatever Jesus told them to do. How foolish it seemed to take cups of water to the president of the feast! He might have thrown it in their faces. Yet, because they obeyed

Jesus, when the water reached the lips of the president, it was found to be delicious wine. Christ cannot make noble men of us unless we daily do whatever He bids.

Jesus at the Wedding

"Jesus was called . . . to the marriage."—St John ii. 2.

Our Master is our example. What He was on the earth such should we be. We may not be like Him in His power, but we may be like Him in His character. Here we see *the Man of God at the feast.* Notice the traits of Christ in this lesson.

I. Sociability.—The Son of Man came eating and drinking; He sat at the wedding-feast and the social table, though doubtless there were at the same table some who were pleasure-loving, frivolous, and thoughtless of God. The man of God is no recluse, no cynic, no hermit. He takes his place in social life, and he casts no shadow over the company.

II. Self-command.—He knew what His powers were, yet He restrained them, until the right moment. Men often err from eagerness to exercise their gifts. Jesus, with the consciousness of Divine power, held Himself in reserve until full thirty years old, and at the feast waited until the instant of need.

III. Subordination.—He maintained close communion with God, and, being controlled fully by the Divine Will, He knew when to use His might. The greater a man's endowments the harder it is for him to submit to rule. But the greatest of all men was fully submissive to the Divine control.

IV. Trust.—Notice the absolute confidence of Jesus that the miracle would be wrought. This was His *first* miracle, yet there was no tremor or hesitation. He leaned fully on God. So let His followers trust, and faith will remove mountains.

V. Helpfulness.—He held His powers for the good of men, and was ready to use them for the need and the enjoyment of others. He would not turn stones into bread to satisfy His own hunger, even when starving; but He would turn water into wine to relieve the anxiety of His friends. Let the disciple's first thought be, "What can I do for others?"

VI. Insight.—Every miracle was a parable in action, having for its inner purpose to reveal some great truth concerning the Kingdom of God. This miracle was rich in its teachings. It showed the contrast of the old and new dispensations, one water, the other wine. It showed the contrast of the world and the Gospel—one limited, transient in enjoyments, lessening its pleasures the more they are possessed; the other abundant, full, richer, better. Perhaps not one of the guests saw the meaning of the miracle then; some may have recognised it long afterward. Let us cultivate the faith which promotes a spiritual insight.

The First Miracle in Cana

"This beginning of miracles."—St John ii. 11.

St John is careful with his notes of time. In the previous chapter he marked the days and even the hours of the progress of events. It is now the third day after the last disciple found down by the Jordan had come to Jesus. But it was about thirty miles from the part of the Jordan where John was baptising to Cana, if this was the place now known as *Kefr Kenna*, five or six miles north-east of Nazareth. Here, then, we have a hint of the reason for John's careful chronology. It shows that Jesus, when once He had begun His ministry, was losing no time. His life was occupied with unwearied activity.

It would seem that our Lord hastened back to the wedding-feast, having stayed by the Jordan with John almost till the last possible moment. Mary's prominence in the domestic affairs has given rise to the reasonable suggestion that she, and therefore her Son also, were related to the family. The notion that the Apostle John was the bridegroom, which some have entertained, is very improbable; there is no hint of that in the narrative, and his mind was now full of another subject, for he had just attached himself to Jesus.

If the disciples who were invited to the feast were the five who had come to Him in the Jordan valley, they together with their Master would constitute an addition of half a dozen to the wedding guests, thus putting no small extra strain on the resources of a peasant's household, for Mary the carpenter's wife's intimacy with the family implies that they belonged to the working classes. This was no rich man's feast; it was very different from the wedding-feast of a king's son in one of our Lord's parables. Generous as hospitable people would wish to be, lavish bounty would be beyond their means. Economy reigns in such a household. Therefore, as frugal folks, they would not have ordered in more provisions than they thought likely to be needed. They possessed no wine-cellar. The running short of wine shows us that they were temperate people. There was no shortcoming of bread. That was plentiful. Some would have been more anxious that the drink should not run out. But so it was that the six extra guests only upset the calculations about the wine. If Jesus had caused the inconvenience He would be sure to wish to remove it. Any gentleman would desire to do so; and Jesus was much more considerate than one who was only influenced by ideas of politeness. This may in some measure account for the exceptional character of the miracle. Perhaps this is the reason why His mother told our Lord of the trouble the household was in; He ought to know what the arrival of so many fresh guests had done. Hospitality in the East is one of the most sacred of functions. An Arab will offer his enemy, who happens to be lodged as a guest in his tent, services which he would not trouble himself to render to his best friend under ordinary circumstances. However, we may see more than this in Mary's appeal to her Son. The absence of all reference to Joseph seems to imply that he was dead. The widow had become accustomed to lean on her strong, wise, good, first-born Son.

The answer which Jesus made to His mother is perplexing; but the harshness with which it sounds on our ears is only due to the English language not conveying the true sentiment of the original. Jesus did not address His mother disrespectfully in calling her "Woman," although this would be positive rudeness on the lips of an English boy. He used the word in His dying utterance to His mother as an exclamation of loving tenderness: "Woman, behold thy Son" (John xix. 26). The Scots have a way of exclaiming "wumman" that is gentle and affectionate. Then the question, "What have I to do with thee?" which sounds to us simply insolent, is perfectly innocent in the original Aramaic. Literally it is, "What is there to Me and to thee?" The phrase is a common idiom frequently met with in the Old Testament. See, for instance, 2 Chron. xxxv. 21. It simply means that at the present moment the speaker does not own that what somebody is saying to him really applies, or that there is any reason for his attention being called to it. Even that, however, may seem strange when spoken by the best of sons to His mother. We can scarcely escape from the idea that there is in it a sort of repudiation of a demand, if not the mildest of rebukes. Was it that Mary, parent-like, was inclined to continue her attitude of authority towards her Son too long into His manhood? Much family bitterness has

risen out of this indiscretion. It is so difficult for us to realise that our children, when full grown, have independent rights, and must follow out their own convictions. The habit of command is not easily laid aside. For Mary the case was peculiarly difficult. Jesus had been the most obedient of boys, "subject unto His parents." In His manhood we may be sure He was the most considerate of sons. Mary would be tempted to take advantage of this lovely trait in His character. But when He was entering on His mission, no human being could be allowed to interfere with what He knew to be the right way of following out His high vocation—not even His mother. He must "tread the winepress alone." Now Mary would be slow to perceive this, and when she had made the discovery it could not but be a pain to her. Already the sword of which the prophetic old Simeon had spoken was beginning to pierce her soul.

Jesus said somewhat enigmatically that His hour was not yet come. He could not have meant His time for working the one particular miracle at the feast. On another occasion He spoke of His hour as the time of His death, the great consummation of His work. The term seems to mean the crisis of His manifestation, when after waiting or remaining unknown, He should come forth and reveal Himself by doing something effectual. It may be that Mary was hungering for Him to declare Himself as the Messiah—little dreaming the horror that would bring to her. Had she anticipated this she would have been in no mood to hasten it on. Now Jesus would have her know that the time of His public claim to be the Christ had not yet come. At present He was but a private person; then why should He be expected to do anything extraordinary?

Nevertheless, Jesus immediately proceeded to do something very extraordinary. It can hardly be supposed that His mother had expected Him to perform so wonderful a miracle, for St John expressly informs us that this was His first miracle. There had been no such wonder during all those thirty years in the Nazareth home. Still, Mary had so much confidence in her Son that she felt sure He could help somehow, though in what way it might be she was unable to conceive. That He did help seems to indicate that after all He anticipated what He had regarded as the time for the beginning of His wonder-working. He was not tied to forms and rules, not bound by times and seasons. Human need was always the call that fetched Him; kindness of heart was always the motive that broke through formal rules and regulations—such as Sabbath-keeping, fasting, etc.

Our Evangelist, according to his custom, is very explicit concerning the details of the scene; with regard to these particulars it is his way to give more minutiæ even than the graphic Mark. He tells us that there were waterpots on the spot which were used for the Jewish washing before eating; that these were six in number; that they were of stone; that each of them held two or three firkins—i.e. over twenty gallons. These details indicate the eyewitness. The waterpots had been used for the washing of the guests—the water being poured over their hands and feet. Therefore they were now empty. Jesus spoke to the servants—or rather the helpers, probably neighbours' daughters come in to assist, for the Greek word does not indicate slaves. It is the word used of Phœbe in Romans xvi. 1, the word from which our "deacon" is derived. These willing helpers tripped off to the well with the great jars poised on their heads and then came back carrying the vessels full to the brim, again according to the invariable custom on their heads—a feat no English girl could rival. It was plain, then, that there was no deception. These jars had not been secretly filled with wine in preparation for a surprise. When the maidens had brought back their heavy

weight of water from the well, Jesus ordered it to be drawn off and sent first to "the governor of the feast"—one of the guests elected to preside—for him to taste it. Now it was wine. The narrative does not say that Jesus converted all the water in those huge jars into wine; so immense a quantity was not needed. The suggestion is that all that was poured into the cups appeared there as wine. The governor was astonished at its quality. He had never sampled such vintage before; and he thought it a mistake to keep this good wine for the end of the feast, when the guests would not be so critical as at the beginning.

The whole scene is welcome to us as a proof of the genial kindness and large-hearted humanity of Jesus Christ. He "adorned and beautified" marriage, as we say in the service of the ceremony, "with His presence and first miracle that He wrought in Cana of Galilee." Jesus came straight from the company of the vegetarian "total abstainer," John the Baptist, to a feast, and there helped the people to wine! We cannot be altogether surprised that the strict called Him "a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber," though no libel was ever more outrageous. Jesus was not an ascetic. He sanctioned and shared in the innocent delights of His neighbours at their simple rustic feasts. Matthew vi. 25 suggests that these were none too frequent. This was not the table of Dives who fared sumptuously *every day*. It was a poor family's feast—one week of brightness in the midst of lives of hard toil. That brightness Jesus did not begrudge. He even helped it.

For all that, the scene has its difficulties. As a nature miracle the wonder is almost inconceivable. But then all miracles pass beyond our understanding. Then many have stumbled at the idea of Jesus giving people wine at all. Might this have been unfermented? We know that the simple juice of the grape was sometimes drunk in the East as a syrup. But this theory will not agree with the governor's remarks. He used a strong term which we have rendered, "drink freely" (verse 10), and which points to some dulling of the senses with alcohol so that poorer wine is not then likely to be detected. He does not say that the guests on this occasion had reached that befuddled condition. We may be certain that they had not, or Jesus would not have given them more generous wine. But the language implies intoxicating drink. What we must say to this is that it was nothing like the danger in Palestine in the days of Christ, when intoxication was a comparatively rare vice that it is in drink-sodden England to-day. Von Holtzmann, in the *Hand-Commentar*, would sweep away every difficulty by regarding the whole narrative simply as an allegory, taking the water to represent John the Baptist's teaching, and the wine the Gospel of Jesus, which supersedes it. But the circumstantial details are too many to commend that arbitrary explanation.

—*Rev. W. F. Adeney, M.A., D.D.*

Anecdotes and Illustrations

MIRACLES.—"Miracle is a clear revelation of a supreme personal Will of righteousness and wisdom and goodness: the Will of the Father ministered by the Son over the universe of Nature, and especially over the world of humanity."—*Bishop Barry.*

MIRACLES.—"We must neither, on the one hand, suppose that Christ's miracles were wrought solely for the purpose of establishing His claim to be God's Viceroy on earth; nor, on the other hand, are we to suppose that the marvels of beneficence by which He was known did nothing to prove His claim or promote His Kingdom. . . . It is because they were wrought from the purest and most self-denying compassion that ever explored and bound

up the wounds of men, that we acknowledge Him as incontestably our King."—"Expositor's Bible" (*St John*).

Miracles and Revelation.—*Luthardt* thus asserts their relation to revelation: (1) "They are the most popular form of authentication"; (2) "The external representation of the thing itself: miracles are a translation of subjects purely spiritual into the hieroglyphics of Nature," which is a world of symbolism; and (3) they are "an essential element of revelation itself. Jesus Christ is *the* miracle, for He is *the* revelation. We believe not merely because of miracles, we believe in the miracle that He is."

Names of the Miracles.—Four words are employed in the New Testament to describe them, viz. (1) *Wonder*, so called from the astonishment produced by them on the beholder; (2) *Sign*, "a token and indication of the near presence and working of God"; (3) *Powers*, *mighty* works, that is, of God; (4) *Works*, the natural form of working for Him Who is dwelt in by all the fulness of God.

Miracles not Violations of Law.—When the engine backs, wheels about, changes track, it as truly obeys law as when it moves and goes straightforward; there is, however, intelligence guiding the machine, and bringing a new law to bear upon its motion. How do we know that a miracle invades or interrupts Nature's fixed order? What if it be the Engineer, the intelligence of the Creator, simply bringing a new set of laws to bear upon the universe?

Jesus at the Marriage Feast.—"None need wonder to find the Lord of Life at this festival; for He came to sanctify all life—to consecrate its times of joy, as its times of sorrow; the former, as all experience teaches, needing above all such a consecration as only His presence, bodily or spiritual, can give. He was there, and by His presence there struck the keynote to the whole tenor of His future ministry. He should not be as another Baptist, a wilderness preacher, withdrawing Himself from the common paths of men."—*Trench*.

Water changed into Wine.—*By* processes that are the wonder of all ages, and a mystery even to the learned, Nature gathers from air and earth the secret of their moisture, and, by the marvellous action of roots and sap-ducts, distils it into the grape; then, by the aid of air and light and heat and actinic ray, slowly changes the acid liquid into delicious nectar. By no artificial process has man been able to imitate the juice of the grape. When Jesus, by an instantaneous process, changed water into grape juice, doing in a moment what Nature does only in months, He showed that He knew Nature's secrets, and so showed Himself the God of Nature and manifested forth His glory.

God the Source of Supply.—In the rectory of St Marco of Florence there is a very pleasant picture wherein St Dominic is seated at table with his monks, and he is asking a blessing over cups that have no wine and platters without bread. His companions are amazed, but even while the saint is praying the Angels of God are moving unseen through the room carrying that bread of which if any man eat he shall never hunger again.

Christ's Stores never Fail.—After a world of hungry men have fed upon Christ He remains inexhaustible as at the beginning like the bread in His own miracles, of which the pieces that were broken and ready to be given to the eaters were more than the original stock as it appeared when the meal began. So like the fabled meal in the Norse Walhalla which the gods sat down to, to-day and to-morrow it is all there on the board as abundant and full as ever.

Christ's Sovereignty.—An old ballad represents one of our English

kings losing his way in a wood and becoming parted from his retinue. A countryman who met him began to pick up acquaintance with him in an easy, familiar style, not knowing his dignity. But when the nobles, having discovered their missing monarch, came riding up with heads uncovered and lowly homage, the countryman trembled at his mistake. So the laws and powers of Nature did homage before Christ, attesting Him to be their Sovereign, and authenticating the Apostles as His servants and messengers.

Obedience.—A story is told of a great captain who, after a battle, was talking over the events of the day with his officers. He asked them who had done the best that day. Some spoke of one man who had fought very bravely, and some of another. "No," he said, "you are all mistaken. The best man in the field to-day was a soldier who was just lifting up his arm to strike an enemy, but when he heard the trumpet sound a retreat checked himself and dropped his arm without striking the blow. That perfect and ready obedience to the will of his general is the noblest thing that has been done to-day."

Obedience and Perfect Trust.—The French Marshal Turenne was the soldiers' hero; they entirely trusted him. Once, when the troops were wading through a heavy morass, some of the younger soldiers complained. But the older ones said: "Depend upon it, Turenne is more concerned than we are; at this moment he is thinking how to deliver us; he watches while we sleep; he is our father, and would not have us go through such fatigue unless he has some great end in view which we cannot make out." We cannot always understand God's dealings, but we must trust and obey.

Obedience the End of Faith.—Faith accepts the command and obeys, just as it also accepts the promise and rests on it. The branch abiding in the vine adjusts itself to the times and seasons of the vine. It puts forth buds, blossoms, and leaves in the spring, fruit in the summer, and in the fall ripens its precious burden for the husbandman; then drops its leaves and composes itself for the rest and strength-gathering time of the winter. Just so we need to adjust ourselves to the will of the Master daily and hourly.

"Woman"—A Polite Form of Speech.—*Woman* seems to us like a rough kind of reply; but Jesus did not so treat His mother. It appears that some of the politest writers of antiquity make the most well-bred and accomplished princes use the expression in addressing ladies of the highest quality; and even servants are sometimes represented as speaking to their mistresses in the same language.—*Ingram Cobbin, M.A.*

Marriage Feasts.—At nuptial feasts there were guests of *two* sorts: first, those that had been invited; secondly, those who came of their own accord, and who were expected to bring presents. The Jewish nuptial feasts continued seven or eight days (Gen. xxix. 27; Judg. xiv. 17). What is here related of the wine falling short may, therefore, be understood of the fifth, sixth, or seventh day, for it is scarcely probable that such a deficiency should have occurred much sooner. It seems to have been occasioned by the unexpected arrival of Jesus and His disciples: Jesus being invited, as being in the neighbourhood, probably not as a prophet, but as a countryman, *relation*, and acquaintance. The idea of relationship arises from the circumstance of Mary being so much concerned about procuring the supply of wine, and also because, when the feast was over, Jesus "went down to Capernaum with His brethren" or relations, who were distinct from His disciples (ver. 12), from which it would seem they all came together as parties interested in this marriage.

Ruins in Cana of Galilee.—"The ruins of a church," says Dr Clarke in his "Travels," "are shown in this place (Cana of Galilee), which is said

to have been erected over the spot where the marriage-feast of Cana was celebrated. It is worthy of notice, that walking among these ruins, we saw large massy *stone* waterpots, answering to the description given of the ancient vessels of the country; not preserved, or exhibited as relics, but lying about disregarded by the present inhabitants, as antiquities with whose original use they were unacquainted. From their appearance, and the number of them, it is quite evident that a practice of keeping water in large *stone* pots, each holding from eighteen to twenty-seven gallons, was once common in the country."

Christian Miracles.—"Miracles," says Fuller, "are the swaddling-clothes of the infant churches"; and, we may add, not the garments of the full-grown. They were as the proclamation that the king was mounting his throne; who, however, is not proclaimed every day, but only at his accession. When he sits acknowledged on his throne the proclamation ceases. They were as the bright clouds which gather round and announce the sun at his first appearing; his midday splendour, though as full and fuller indeed of light and heat, knows not those bright heralds and harbingers of his rising. Or they may be likened to the framework on which the arch is rounded, which framework is taken down as soon as that is completed.

—*Archbishop Trench.*

Critical Notes on the Gospel

The Third Day.—That is, from the last note of time in chap. i. 43, giving one clear day between the call of Philip and the day of the marriage. *There was a marriage*—The rabbis had fixed Wednesday as the day on which maidens should be married, and Friday for widows; so that, if the bride at Cana was now married for the first time, we know the day of the week on which the ceremony took place. She might be very young, for girls became wives in the East when twelve or fourteen, or even younger. *Cana of Galilee*—To distinguish it from Cana of Asher (Josh. xix. 28). This Cana is not mentioned in the Old Testament; it was the home of Nathanael (xxi. 2), and is now generally identified with Kâna-el-Jelîl, about six miles north of Nazareth, an obscure, uninhabited village, in ruins. There were formerly shown the place where the marriage took place here, and even the waterpots, but these are now shown at the rival Kefr Kenna. The ruins are on the side of a hill looking over the plain of *El Buttauf*, rather more than six miles to the north or north-east of Nazareth. *The mother of Jesus*—John alone of all the Evangelists never gives the Virgin a name. Here, as so often, he assumes that his readers know the main points in the Gospel narrative; or it may be part of the reserve which he exhibits with regard to all that nearly concerns himself. If anyone will take pains to group all the facts which bear upon the incidents narrated he will hardly escape the conviction that John was the bridegroom, and that Salome, the mother of John, was a kinswoman of Mary, the mother of Jesus. This was a tradition in the early Church, and sufficiently accounts for the presence of Jesus and His mother, and the interest the latter took in the entertainment. It is significant that this first miracle was performed in the bosom of a family, for the family is the first institution of God on earth and the nursery of Church and State, where all moral reforms of society must begin. The fact that Joseph is not mentioned in either of the Gospels after Christ's manhood has led to the general opinion that he was dead.

Jesus was Called.—The student will observe that it is said of Mary that she *was there*, of Jesus that He *was called*, an indication that He came

at a later period, and probably after the marriage-feast, which usually lasted for several days, had begun. *And His disciples*—Andrew, John, Peter, Philip Nathanael, and probably James. It is quite in accord with Eastern hospitality that the disciples, who are now spoken of under this collective title, and formed with their rabbi a band of seven, should be bidden with Him. This unexpected increase of the number of guests may account for the failure of the wine supply. *To the marriage*—The earthen floor and the ledge round the wall would be spread with carpets, the walls hung with garlands, the spirits of all bright and cheerful as the decorated chamber, and the modest rejoicings in no way clouded by the presence of Mary's Son and His followers.

When They Wanted Wine—Better, *when the wine failed.* To Eastern hospitality such a mishap would seem a disgraceful calamity. Scholars are divided as to the precise meaning of the various words in the Old and New Testaments translated wine. *Dr Whedon* is one of the strongest advocates of the interpretation which would trace two kinds of wine—the fermented and the unfermented—throughout the record. Concerning this miracle he writes: "There are two sorts, or rather states, of wine: the one the unfermented grape juice, which is simply exhilarating; the other the fermented, which is intoxicating. Fermentation is a phenomenon of decomposition analogous to putrefaction in a dead animal. The grape juice is alive in the grape, consisting of sugar and albumen held into juice form by the life power. When pressed out of the grape the dying grape decomposes; the albumen, uniting with the oxygen of the air, becomes yeast, and the sugar becomes alcohol, which is the intoxicating substance. The grape juice, or new wine, in its live, natural, undecomposed state, is a cheering and nutritious food. By boiling it is cooked, and so protected from decomposition and retained in its condition as food." It is only fair to state that the majority of commentators do not concur with this view in every particular. It is a question of scholarship, and on its settlement depends no phase of the temperance question. *The mother of Jesus saith unto Him*—If she were in any way responsible for the success of the feast and the supply was falling short the appeal for help to her Son was natural; and it was specially so if as modern customs in the Orient indicate, the guests contributed to the supplies at such entertainments. All our wants should be made known unto Jesus. Many Christians lose their best opportunities for usefulness and happiness for lack of personal confidential relations with our Lord.

Jesus saith unto her, Woman.—Were proof needed of the tenderness which underlies the word Woman, as used by Jesus, it would be found in the other instances which the Gospels supply. It is spoken only to the Syrophœnician whose faith is great (Matt. xv. 28), to the daughter of Abraham loosed from her infirmity (Luke xiii. 12), and, in this Gospel, to the Samaritan embracing the higher faith (chap. iv. 21), to the same mother from the Cross (chap. xix. 26), and to Mary Magdalene in tears (chap. xx. 13-15). *What have I to do with thee*—The question, "What is that to Me and to thee?"—what concern that is common?—may mean either "Do not push this matter in My way," or "Do not press Me with untimely suggestions." *Mine hour is not yet come*—The proper time for My interposing. Perhaps the wine was not yet entirely exhausted. The wine has begun to fail, but He could not work a miracle until it was entirely gone, that the miracle might be free from all possibility of suspicion.

His Mother saith.—Between the lines of His refusal her faith reads a better answer to her appeal. *Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it*—Here is the true spirit of obedience; not slavishness, but entire loyalty and perfect

trust in a person whom we reverence. She did not comprehend her Son's strange repulse and mysterious words; but she knew that they were not capricious words, for there was no caprice in Him. So she bade them reverently wait in silence till His time should come. The direction which Mary gives to the servants belongs to us all. We must perform simple obedience to Christ in all things; His sayings must be our doings. *Do it*—She speaks as having authority here, and she speaks to subordinate that authority to Him.

Six Waterpots of Stone.—As an eyewitness John remembers their number, material, and size. The surroundings of the first miracle would not easily be forgotten. It is idle to seek for any special meaning in the number six. Vessels of stone were preferred, as being less liable to impurity. They resembled, but were larger than, the vessels used for carrying water, as in chap. iv. 28. These were placed in the outer court, away from the guest chamber, and the governor of the feast is ignorant of the circumstances (ver. 9). *After the manner of the purifying of the Jews*—Personal cleanliness was one of the virtues of the Jews, made yet more sacred by their religion. Hence this large provision in the household for supplies of water. The washing of cups and jugs and bottles went on the whole day. The reference to the manner of the Jews is added for the Gentile readers, for whom John especially wrote. *Two or three firkins*—"Firkin" is an almost exact equivalent of the Greek *metretes*, which was about nine gallons. The six pitchers, therefore, holding from eighteen to twenty-seven gallons each, would together hold one hundred and six to one hundred and sixty-two gallons.

They Filled Them.—Duties are ours; events are God's. It is ours to fill the waterpots; it is Christ's to make the water wine. *God delights to give to us liberally.* A truth which should comfort us as recipients and inspire us as givers.

Draw Out Now, and Bear unto the Governor of the Feast.—A vessel was let down into the pitcher and was then carried to the ruler of the feast, who would distribute the wine to the guests. *Ruler* rather than "governor." The same English word should be used throughout the two verses. What exact office is denoted by the Greek word is uncertain, as it occurs nowhere else in the Bible, and is very rare in the classical authors. The chief English commentators (*Alford*, *Wordsworth*, *Trench*) are agreed that he was chosen by the guests from among their own number, but this opinion has not commanded the general assent of scholars; and there seems more reason to think that the person intended is what we would call the "head waiter," whose duty it was to taste the viands and wines, to arrange the tables and couches, and to be generally responsible for the feast.

The Water that was made Wine.—As long ago as Augustine it was said that Jesus, in this miracle, did *rapidly* what the God of Nature does *slowly* every autumn. Christ only accelerated the process of Nature in making water into wine. *Knew not whence it was*—The governor knew that it was wine when he drank it, though he knew not *whence it was*; the servants knew whence it was, but had not yet tasted it. If the taster had seen the drawing of it, or the drawers had had the tasting of it, something might have been imputed to fancy, but now no room is left for suspicion. *Called the bridegroom*—Called out to him, probably, across the table. The language which follows is sportive and characteristic of such an occasion of festivity.

Every Man at the Beginning doth set forth good Wine; and when Men have well Drunk, then that which is worse.—The verb

rendered in our English Version "have well drunk" is literally, *are drunken.* Our translators have timidly shrunk from giving the full coarseness of the man's joke. In Matt. xxiv. 49; Acts ii. 15; 1 Cor. xi. 21; 1 Thess. v. 7; Rev. xvii. 2-6, we have the same words rightly translated. *Tyndall* and *Cranmer* were more accurate; they have "*be dronke.*" There is clearly no reference to the present feast. It is a coarse jest of the ruler, the sort of remark that forms part of the stock-in-trade of a hired manager of banquets.

THIS BEGINNING OF MIRACLES DID JESUS IN CANA OF GALILEE.—Or, more exactly, *This did Jesus in Cana of Galilee as the beginning of His signs.* The form of the sentence makes it certain that it is the absolutely first, and not the first in Cana, which is meant. This verse is conclusive against the miracles of Christ's childhood recorded in the Apocryphal Gospels. *His glory*—This is the final cause of Christ's "signs," His own and His Father's glory (xi. 4), and these two are one. Four hundred years had elapsed since the Jews had seen a miracle.

Questions on the Gospel

1. What was happening at Cana? 2. How many people did Jesus take with Him? 3. What went wrong during the feast? 4. What did Mary do? 5. Why did she tell Jesus? 6. How did He answer her? 7. How do we know that His answer was not unkind? 8. What did Jesus say about His hour? 9. What did He mean? 10. What did Mary say to the servants? 11. What sort of vessels were standing near? 12. How much did they hold? 13. What did Jesus order to be done? 14. To whom were the servants to take the wine? 15. Who was the governor of the feast? 16. What did the governor say when he had drunk? 17. What did Jesus show by this miracle? 18. What effect did it have on His disciples?

Books of Reference

Century Bible, "St John"; "Cambridge Bible"; "Expositor's Bible"; *Reith's* "St John"; *Westcott's* "St John"; *Edersheim's* "Jesus the Messiah," chapter xiii; *Geikie's* "Life and Words of Christ," chapter xix; *Bruce's* "Miraculous Element in the Gospel"; *Farrar's* "Life of Christ"; For Wedding Customs—*Van Lennep's* "Bible Lands"; *Robertson's* Sermons, "The Glory of the Virgin Mother" and "The Glory of the Divine Son"; "The Biblical Illustrator."

The Epistle

ROMANS XII. 6-16.

Christian Living

"*Be kindly affectioned one to another.*"—*Rom. xii.* 10.

I. THE CHRISTIAN LIVES FOR GOD.—Our lives are to be spent among all sorts and conditions of men. We cannot if we would, and God does not desire that we should, shut ourselves up in a cell or cave, like the hermits, away from all human beings, and alone with God. Jesus did not so live, though He loved to be alone with His Heavenly Father on the quiet moun-

tain-side. But yet there is a side of Christian life which has to do with God only or chiefly.

There is a side of the moon which we never see—is never turned towards this earth. The ancient pagan altars were inscribed to such and such a god. So the altar of our lives is to be erected to "The One True and Living God, our Father." What shall we write on it? Our lesson will tell us.

1. *Fervent* (ver. 11). Means "boiling up"; thoroughly in earnest about serving God. Difference between fussiness and froth—lasting a little while and then passing away—and real, warm, earnest zeal for God. He sees our hearts, and marks the difference. Take such earnestness as that of the veteran missionary, Joseph Matthews, spending sixty years among the Maoris of New Zealand.

2. *Cheerful* (ver. 12). A bright and happy spirit should be cultivated by all who profess to have found pardon and peace through Jesus—both towards God (as here taught) and towards man (as taught in ver. 8); and in this we follow our Lord (see John xv. 11, 24).

3. *Patient* (ver. 12). Of which Paul himself sets a noble example.

4. *Prayerful* (ver. 12). Communion with our Father keeps the fire burning on the altar.

"I want to be like Jesus,
So frequently in prayer," etc.

II. The Christian Lives for the Church.—For the Church in no narrow sense, but for "all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." "For Christ and the Church" is the Christian Endeavour motto. Christ made His Church a brotherhood, which would embody His teaching and perpetuate His example in actual and everyday life. So the Church becomes "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. iii. 15). Young people do not realise now, as the early Christians did, the enjoyments and advantages of fellowship, but these are often intensely appreciated in distant colonies and heathen lands, and the Church needs to make its fellowship more attractive and helpful to the young than is often the case.

To our fellow-Christians we are here taught to be—1. *Loving*. 2. *Sincere*. "See how these Christians love one another!" was said in far-off ages. Why is it not said now? We are so much narrower than the early disciples, and there is too little of brotherhood. But no "honied words" will atone for insincerity of heart. 3. *Self-forgetful* (vers. 10, 13). (*a*) In the matter of courtesy and precedence. Every Christian lad should be a true gentleman, and every Christian maiden a true lady, whatever their social position or education may be. Forgetfulness of self; respect for brethren, and especially for elder Christians; readiness to give up precedence, and to take the lowest place without being asked (Luke xiv. 10); gentle courtesy towards women on the part of boys and men; the chivalry which stands up for the weak and oppressed—these are forms of the virtue taught and exemplified by St Paul. (*b*) In the matter of benevolence.

"Cuvier, the great zoologist, had planned a scientific work, when he discovered that another naturalist, Agassiz, was prosecuting researches in the same direction. Cuvier, instead of preparing and publishing his studies, placed his sketches and memoranda in the hands of Agassiz, begging him to accept and use them."

III. The Christian Lives for the World.—Christ died for all men. God "will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." We have to win the world to Christ. What graces will most commend the Gospel to men at large who are not His disciples? Begin at home.

We are taught here to be—1. *Sympathising* (ver. 15). Mrs Fry, the prisoners' friend, won the hardened criminals in Newgate by the power of sympathy. 2. *Honourable* (ver. 17). As Joseph, Nehemiah, and Daniel. 3. *Peaceable* (ver. 18). 4. *Forbearing* (vers. 19, 20).

Sophia Dorothea, the innocent and ill-used wife of George I., was kept a prisoner in the castle of Ahlen for thirty years, separated from her children and watched like a criminal. Yet she never uttered a vindictive word. She committed her cause to God, and sought to do good among her poor neighbours, and to aid the progress of religion.

The summing-up. In personal character: "Abhor evil," etc. In effort for Christ: "Overcome evil."

Story of "the man who killed his neighbours"—bearing quietly with petty annoyances, and showing kindness in return. First missionaries in South Africa; houses and crops set on fire.

Christian Love

"Love is the fulfilling of the law."—Rom. xiii. 10.

I. Introduction.—Recall Paul having to write to his Christian people, to tell them what sort of people Christians ought to be. Who the Pattern for Christians? But these people had not seen the Pattern, and many of them had never heard of Him till Paul told them. What had many of them been? (Heathens, idolators.) If *we* want to know about Jesus, where do we look? But those people had no New Testament, so Paul had to tell them, and to write to them. Think how they would prize his letters, read them over and over, treasure them up. And so we have come to know what was written in many of these letters.

II. Love.—Do any of you know what it is? Do you love anyone? Whom? Does anyone love you? Who? Do you like to be loved? God meant us to love and be loved. Anyone who could truly say, "No one loves me," and "I love no one," could not be happy.

Children are often naughty, have to be forgiven many times—have sometimes to be punished. But to be *unloving* is worse than to be sometimes naughty and sorry for it afterward.

Perhaps you have a pussy and a doggie that you love and take care of. When he is pleased to see you, and rubs against you, you say, "See how he loves me!" Perhaps you often put your arms round the neck of a little brother or sister, or friend, and say, "I love you."

But perhaps very little boys and girls understand best what love is when they sit on father's or mother's knee, and are nursed and sung to, and petted and kissed. They see how much they are loved, and they put their arms round father's or mother's neck in return, and say, "Oh, I *do* love you *so* much."

But just *saying*, "I love you," is not enough. How shall we *show* that we love others? If a boy says he loves pussy, and then is cruel to her, would you think much of what he says? How should he show his love? If a little girl tells her friend she loves her, and yet will not do the least thing to help her, or please her, would you think much of what she says? And suppose the child who puts his arms round his mother's neck, and says, "I love you," soon after says, "I shan't," or "I won't," when told to do something for her? How should children show their love to their parents? Not only by words, but by *doing* what they wish—obeying their commands.

Yet we know that some children obey not because they like to do so, but for fear of punishment if they disobey. So they obey unwillingly, slowly,

unpleasantly. Will that kind of obedience do? Are parents pleased with that? Is God pleased with it? How ought we to obey? Willingly, cheerfully, quickly.

Whom do you think we ought to love best in the world? Why? A child who has no love for his mother or father, or brother or sister, would be considered not fit to be a child, but to be worse than the animals, that love those who feed them and take care of them.

There is yet Someone else to love—Someone Who has been kinder to us even than our parents; Who gave us parents and all the good things we have. Who is it? Tell some of the good things He has given? And the best of all His gifts? Why has He given all these, and many, many more? Has God anything to do with love? What does the Bible say? God *is* love. From Him the love came at first, and the more of it we have and the more of it we show, the better God is pleased. Now, we *may* obey God without loving Him (try to fulfil His law), just as the child may obey his father from fear of punishment; but that is not the kind of obedience God likes to see. What kind, then? God looks into the heart and sees if there is *love* to Him there, and see if we obey Him because we wish to please Him. We should obey Him because He loves us, and is so good to us, and because *we love Him* in return. We often do wrong (*sin* against God); but *not to love Him* is the greatest sin of all. But suppose we think we do not yet love our good Heavenly Father and Friend, what are we to do? Pray, *Lord, teach me to love Thee.*

III. Lessons.—1. Plenty of love in our hearts is the best thing we can have there. It is much better than pride or than anger, better than being clever, or rich, or pretty. We may often do more good with a heart full of love than with a pocket full of money.

2. We are to make sure that we love God, our parents, brothers and sisters, friends, but we need not stop there; we may love everything that God loves.

3. We are not to keep all our love for those who show kindness to us. Most people thought so before Jesus taught them better. Most of the people whom Paul preached to thought so. But Paul wanted them to learn to live the life of Jesus, and Jesus said, *Love your enemies.*

4. It is not enough to *say* we love, we must *show* it. To God, our parents, teachers, etc., by willing obedience; to all around us by kind looks, and words, and readiness to help and please; by acts of self-denial, etc. Those who have most love in their hearts will live lives the most like Jesus.

"A heart full of love is better than gold,
And better than beauty or birth;
Where self is forgotten and pride has no place,
That's the loveliest sight upon earth."

Christian Living

"*Let love be without dissimulation.*"—*Rom. xii.* 9.

Our subject is the last part of one of those wonderful chapters which compel the admiration of all readers of Paul's Epistles. Even students who do not accept his theology are constrained to acknowledge the grandeur of his ethical teaching. Erasmus says of this chapter, "No song can be sweeter." Beginning with our duty to God (verses 1 and 2), the Apostle turns to our duty to the Church (3 to 8), and finally sets forth our duty to all men in a series of general maxims (9 to 21) whose keynote is the word "love." Bishop Wordsworth said, "The Holy Spirit by the hand of St Paul hath

indited here a chapter of Christian proverbs," and that is a very apt description. It is hardly possible to make any artificial grouping of these maxims which shall include all; our better plan will be to go through the passage sentence by sentence, endeavouring to give the sense and point the application of each.

Verse 9. These "exhortations for all without distinction" are "headed by love." And the literal rendering of the verse is—"Let love be without hypocrisy, abhorring the evil, cleaving to the good." It is the part of unfeigned love to hate the evil that mars the imperfect characters of those whom, nevertheless, we sincerely love, and to attach ourselves to and encourage the good that there is in them. This is loving them wisely "for their good, to edification" (Rom. xv. 2). The foolish fondness which condones wrongdoing is not true love. The ancients represented love as blind; Christian love must be clear-sighted. God loves us, but hates our sin.

Verse 10. The word translated "kindly affectioned" (A.V.), or "tenderly affectioned" (R.V.), is a family word which has special reference to the natural affection which binds together the members of the same household. Probably our translators had this in view, and used kindly in its strict sense, "of the kind," "of the stock or family." The children of the Heavenly Father are bound by a tie stronger than that of blood, which makes them brother and sister—one family in Christ. So while we love all men, we should cherish a special affection for "them of the household of faith." Isaac Taylor has written nobly of "The Family Affection of Christianity"; "Christian affection has the permanence it derives from an indissoluble bond, the vigour given it by participation in suffering and reproaches, and the depth it receives from the prospect of an unbounded futurity." "In honour preferring one another" might be rendered "in giving honour one leading the other on." So Paul exhorted the Philippians (2-3) to fulfil his joy, "in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself"; and Peter (1 Ep. v. 5) says, "All of you gird yourselves with humility to serve one another." The Christian is taught to "honour all men"; and so "spiritual religion is the noblest school of courtesy, constantly rebuking the self-regard which is the essence of discourtesy."

Verse 11. This is a passage which has been greatly misunderstood: probably most of the sermons preached upon it have had no foundation in the words of the Apostle. The Revised Version gives the true sense. Paul liked to speak of himself as a slave of Christ; and that is what every Christian should be. President Edwards wrote of himself, "I have given myself, all that I am and have, so that I am in no respect my own. I can challenge no right in myself, in this understanding, this will, these affections; neither have I a right to this body or any of its members, no right to this body, these hands, these feet, these eyes, these ears—I have given myself clean away." The believer is no longer his own, he belongs to Christ, and his life is one of service. In this service we are exhorted to diligence and zeal, thoroughness and fervency: while "the more intense our earnestness, the more need we remember that we act at the bidding of Christ and do His work. Our energy must be under His direction."

Verse 12. Rejoicing in hope—Paul had written earlier in the letter (v. 2). "We exult in hope of the glory of God." The consciousness of pardon and peace with God calling forth hope of blessings to come. Perhaps the noblest expression of the Christian's hope is to be found in the words of Peter (1 Ep. i. 3-5). Patient in tribulation. Patience is much more than uncomplaining; it means steadfastness, heroic endurance. "When the

burden is heavy we must pursue our path in spite of it." Continuing steadfastly in prayer, even when the answer is long delayed. (*Cf.* xiii. 6; Acts i. 14; Col. iv. 2; and Matt. xv. 21-28.)

> "Pray, if thou canst, with hope; but ever pray,
> Though hope be weak, or sick with long delay."

Verse 13. The troublous times through which the Church was passing made these kindred duties of pressing importance. When Christians were liable to be exiled and spoiled for the faith, there was great need for distributing to the necessities of the saints, and pursuing hospitality. How well the early Church obeyed the first command we can see in the course of a study of the Book of Acts (*cf.* iv. 34, xi. 27-30; 2 Cor. viii. 1-4). The second phrase indicates "something very different from that sumptuous entertainment of one's personal friends which is now commonly called hospitality: it is rather the manifestation of our loving care for the stranger guest." And the use of the word "pursuing" (as Godet says) shows that we are not to confine ourselves to according hospitality when it is asked, but that we should even seek opportunities of exercising it (*cf.* Luke xiv. 12-14).

Verse 14. "Bless them which persecute you: bless and curse not"—according to our Lord's own precept (Luke vi. 28) and example (Luke xxiii. 34). Words like these find no parallel among the teaching of heathen sages: the Emperor Julian, while borrowing the idea from the Gospel he rejected, felt that it would be unfamiliar to his heathen readers, saying apologetically, "I would affirm, even though it be a strange thing to say, that even to one's enemies it would be right to give clothing and food." One of the great Fathers of the Church takes up the saying that "to love enemies is too much for human nature." But David did this to Saul and Absalom, Stephen prayed for the enemies that were stoning him; Jesus both taught and did it, "Father forgive them."

Verse 15. Rejoice with them that rejoice and weep with them that weep has well been called "a beautiful and precious precept." As in a mirror is reflected the image of every passing object, so should our hearts, quickly sensitive, and responsive, give to all whom we meet the assurance that they are not alone; that we are with them, interested in them, identified with them. This entering into the feelings of others is the truest and surest way to help them; sympathy gives value to all service. It will make us increasingly useful, understanding others better as we learn to put ourselves in their places, we shall be able to give them more enduring and uplifting help. And it will humanise us, proving the richest means of spiritual culture. Walking in the footsteps of our Saviour we shall learn more of His mind, and become more like Him Who "bore our sins and carried our sorrows." It may indeed be said that the degree to which we sympathise with others is the measure of our Christian life; and "to rejoice at the joy of others is more difficult than to share their sorrow."

Verse 16. Be of the same mind one toward another: so Paul exhorts the Philippians, "that ye be of the same mind." The idea is, "Let there be in the breast of each one kindly thought and purpose touching all the others." The next precept may be translated in two ways. (1) According to the Authorised Version the meaning is, "Think kindly toward one another, and, therefore, think not high things (of personal vanity or social pride), but be companions with the lowly." The Apostle would have no abominable caste distinctions among Christians. "The Gospel alone knows the full meaning of 'Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity.'" (2) According to the

Revised Version the meaning is, "Don't seek to have to do with great matters; and think nothing which will advance the Kingdom of God too small for your attention." Whichever rendering we accept, the spirit inculcated is that of humility. That man is humble who "esteems himself small before God"; and so it is by a natural contrast that the Apostle adds, "Be not wise in your own conceit" (*cf. Prov. iii.* 11).

Verse 17. Render to no man evil for evil. If forgiveness be the original and characteristic virtue of Christianity (says Dr Denney), it is because revenge is the most natural and instinctive of vices. It is a kind of wild justice, as Bacon says, and men will hardly be persuaded that it is not just. It is the vice which most easily passes itself off as a virtue, but in the Church it is to have no opportunity of doing so. Take thought for things honourable in the sight of all men: i.e. be careful so to act as to have the respect of all men, and avoid just reproach from without as well as from within the Church. This watchfulness about the opinion of others is anything but a slavery to opinion. It is an anxiety to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things (Titus 2-10). It is the very opposite of the tendency to make concessions of principle or to adopt fashions of opinion as a standard of duty (Moule).

Verse 18. If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, live peaceably with all men. Neither disturb others, nor be disturbed by them. The first is wholly in our power; the second is not; and so the emphasis must be laid upon You. "Even those who are most quiet and peaceable (says Matthew Henry), yet if they serve God faithfully are often made men of strife. We can but 'follow peace,' have the making only of one side of the bargain, and therefore can but, 'as much as in us lies, live peaceably.'"

Verses 19 and 20. Beloved—"the more difficult the duty the more affectionate the address, 'avenge not yourselves, but give place unto the wrath—give room for God's anger, do not interfere with the Divine prerogative by taking vengeance into your own hands. For it is written, vengeance, etc. (Deut. xxxii. 35, *cf.* Heb. x. 30). It is sometimes said that belief in a God who takes vengeance tends to make men revengeful; Paul takes the opposite view. The thought that God will inevitably punish all who injure us ought to keep us back from revenge. Therefore, if thine enemy, etc. Paul uses as his own the familiar proverb (xxv. 21). The phrase, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head has been explained, (1) of burning shame, produced by requital of good for evil; (2) of the melting of the evildoer's heart by such conduct as of metal by fire; (3) of the result of a spirit of love, as producing at length the incense of prayer and praise (as from censer coals) from the conquered heart. A simpler, yet more inclusive explanation is Alford's: "In thus doing you will be taking the most effectual vengeance; the idea of vengeance being in the Christian's view transformed so as to become in fact the victory of love" (H. C. G. Moule).

Verse 21. What more beautiful close could there be to the chapter than the wonderful precept which sums up the Apostle's teaching on this subject? Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. As Dr Agar Beet puts it: If we retaliate we do wrong, and thus evil gains a victory over us. But if the injury be met with kindness, it develops our moral character and thus does us good. In this way, by doing good we gain a victory over evil. And if our kindness lead the adversary to repentance, goodness gains a double victory. There is no other alternative possible. If a man do wrong to us, we must always either conquer or be conquered by the evil. There is a beautiful Sanscrit verse which echoes the teaching of Christ and of Paul, and with which our reading may close—

" Forgiveness conquers man.
What is there which forgiveness cannot achieve?
What can the wicked do to him who holds the sword of peace in his right hand? "—*Rev. G. H. James.*

The Christian's Speech

"*Speak not evil one against another.*"—*James iv.* 11 (R.V.).

This is a good rule for children and for parents also. A village schoolmaster one day missed several of his scholars being absent without leave. The morning passes away, and they do not appear. In the afternoon some of the truants turned up. The master had a strong suspicion where they had been. When asked some of them said they had been out for mother; others, that they had been minding the baby. " Let me look inside your mouth," said the master. One after another of the lads opened their mouths—they were all black inside. " I thought as much," said he, " you have been rambling in the fields and lanes picking blackberries; your black tongue betrays you." My dear young friends, if I looked inside your mouths I should find them black not with blackberries, but with something far worse, speaking evil one against another. How fond some children are of fault-finding—and some of us older ones also—of blackening the good name of schoolfellow, companion, neighbour. There is nothing so easy to form, or so hard to overcome, as this habit of speaking evil and thinking evil one of another. It is most miserable and depressing to be with those who yield to the temptation to do this. I do not like to have their company.

When I was at the city of Zurich I saw in one of the museums an old table, which had been the tea-table for many generations in a family to which it belonged. Round it were certain words written. I took out my pocket-book and wrote the words, which read thus : " Those who like to speak evil of the absent ones shall know that this table is forbidden them." What an excellent rule for a tea-table or any other table! It is quite unnecessary to dwell upon other people's errors and failings and sins.

Of course, I do not say if you know a person has done wrong you are not to speak of it at all. It is right to condemn everything wrong; but let us make sure we are right in condemning them; let us make sure that we are not censuring them wrongfully. A word once uttered can never be recalled. A Persian proverb runs thus : " There are three things that never return—a sped arrow, the present opportunity, and the spoken word." Yes, the spoken word can never be recalled. We may try to explain it away, we may feel sorry for it, but we cannot recall it. Do, dear boys and girls, try to be better than some of us parents in this respect; let us have the charity, the love that rejoiceth not in iniquity, hopeth all things, believeth all things. How sorry we sometimes feel when we find we keep repeating what is not true, or speaking unkindly without any justification for speaking so. A hundred times we have spoken unkindly, and are sorry for it, to one time that we have held our peace and been sorry for it.

" Words are things of little cost,
Quickly spoken, quickly lost.
We forget them but they stand
Witnesses at God's right hand,
And their testimony bear
For us or against us there.

But how often ours have been
Idle words and words of sin,
Words of anger, scorn, and pride,
Or desire our faults to hide,
Evil tales or strife unkind
Leaving bitter thoughts behind."

—*Rev. A. A. Ramsay.*

Overcoming Evil

"*Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*"—*Rom. xii.* 21.

To overcome means to conquer, to beat, to win the battle. Evil means sin—all that is wrong and bad. Our life in this world is a war against evil. We do not know where evil came from, nor how it came; but we know that God does not want it to be here. And He has sent us into the world to fight against it, and overcome it. And fight we must, or let ourselves be conquered; for sin will not let any of us alone. It tries to become our lord and king. It tempts us to do bad deeds in order that by and by these deeds may become habits, and habits become character, and that instead of doing bad things sometimes, we may do them always. And when a boy is the slave of a bad habit he has been overcome by evil. So, if we don't want to be conquered ourselves, we must all of us conquer evil. This is the battle of life.

But how is the fight carried on? We can't fight evil with fists or weapons. How, then, can a boy or girl overcome evil?

I. By Resistance.—When Jesus Christ was in this world He did no sin. He overcame evil. But He was often tempted. Sin tried to conquer Jesus in many ways. Once He was alone in a great wilderness for forty days, and while there He was tempted over and over again to do wrong. But every time He resisted. He said No! "Get thee behind Me, Satan!" He would not look at evil—would not consider it for a moment, would not give it a thought. He fixed His heart on doing right, and each time the thought of sin came to Him the answer was the same, No! and so He overcame evil. He was tempted after that many, many times. He was tempted in all points like as we are—exactly as you are tempted every day; yet He kept Himself without sin, because He always resisted it at the very beginning.

Well, Jesus is our Example. His life is the headline which God sets us to copy. He died for us. Yes! but He lived for us too. He lived and died that we might be like Him. As the hymn says:

"He died that we might be forgiven,
He died to make us good."

Let us then copy Him in the way He conquered sin. Let us fix our hearts on being and going good, and every time we are tempted to do wrong let us not think and consider; let us not say, "It would be nice, but of course it is wrong"; let us not keep it waiting for an answer, but say at once, as Jesus did: "Get thee behind me, Satan"; and so conquer sin as He did at the very start.

II. By Forbearance.—The Bible sometimes calls sin a serpent, because, like the snake, it glides silently into our lives, and softly winds itself about our hearts, doing great harm yet making no noise.

But at other times the Bible speaks of sin as a roaring lion that goeth about seeking whom he may devour. What does it mean by that? Well, it means that we all have to deal not only with sin in our own hearts, but also

with sin in the hearts and lives of others. When someone is unkind to you, ungrateful, unfair, or cruel; when you feel yourself provoked to anger, to revenge—then you are attacked by the roaring lion. Sin is trying to conquer you from the heart of another. The lion is after you.

Well, Jesus too was attacked by this same lion; but He overcame it. Do you remember what happened on Calvary? Cruel men laid a Cross on the ground: they stretched Jesus on it, and then nailed His hands and feet to the Cross.

That was very hard to bear. It is hard even to read about it. But Jesus bore it. Nay, He conquered it, for while they were in the very act of doing that He said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

All the cruelty failed to make Him bitter or angry. He overcame it with the goodness of His love.

Well, that is the way for you to conquer the lions when they roar at you from the hearts of others. When others are unkind and unjust be kind and just yourself. And so you will keep the evil from entering your life, and will help to get it out of their lives.

Old books tell us of a place in Arabia where roses grow so thickly that when the wind blows over them it gets so full of the sweet smells as to kill the lions in the desert beyond. Of course that is not true as a fact. There is no such place in Arabia. But it is true as a parable. You can kill lions with roses. The lions I mean are the lions of sin, and the roses are the roses of love.

III. By Repentance.—Jesus never needed this third way, for He never sinned. But we often do. Sin gets into our lives, and it is a blessed thing for us that, even after sin has conquered us, it is possible for us by God's mercy to conquer it in the end. We may lose a battle but need not lose the war, for we can repent.

What is repentance? Being sorry for sin? No, not exactly. It means thinking again. "Second thoughts are best," says the proverb. And repentance means "second thoughts."

Whenever we sin we think foolishly and wickedly. We deceive ourselves. When we repent we think better of it—we think wisely and rightly. And when by a foolish, wicked thought we allow sin to conquer us, we still can by means of repentance—of the second wise thoughts that God always gives to those who will take them—drive out sin again.

Some time ago a little girl went into a room where a table was laid for dinner. Among other things there was a plate of oranges. The little girl felt tempted to take one of these, and she let herself be conquered by the wicked thought. She walked up to the table and took one, and then, not knowing that she was being watched all the time, went out of the room.

But in a few minutes the one who was watching saw her come back. She walked quickly to the table and put the orange she had stolen back in its place, saying as she did so "Sold again, Satan!" You see she had been beaten at first. She had not resisted. But God gave her second thoughts, gave her repentance; and by repentance she was able to overcome evil and to enjoy a victory much sweeter than any orange she could taste—the joy of being able to say, "Sold again, Satan!"

Well, we too have allowed ourselves to be beaten at the first battle. We have all bad habits growing on us. Some have bad tempers. Some tell lies. Some are not quite honest. Some use bad language. Some are lazy. Some are proud.

Let us think better of these things. Let us think wisely of them. Let us repent, and by repentance reconquer the good we have lost, so that we may

cease to be slaves and prisoners of war—that we may herein conquer, having overcome evil with good.

May God help us to win this great battle.—*Rev. J. M. Gibbon, M.A.*

Thinking of One's Self

"*Not to think of himself more highly than he ought.*"—*Rom. xii.* 3.

You know, children, that some things are easy to do, and other things are very hard to do. The text tells us a hard thing to do: not to think of oneself more highly than he ought to think.

But what does this mean? It means that no boy or girl, man or woman, should over-estimate himself or herself, should think more of self than is proper or right. If you are all the time thinking about yourselves, what you are, what you wear, what you can do to attract attention, and have everybody look at you; if you feel above others, that you are brighter, smarter, prettier, dress better than they, you think more highly of yourselves than you ought to think. And so you are meant by the text.

Let us visit a boy that thinks more highly of himself than he ought to think, and see how he behaves. He sits still a little while after we go in, for we are strangers. He has never seen us before. But soon he does or says something to let us know that he is at home and must not be forgotten. We must pay attention to him as well as to his mother. But we keep on talking with his mother, until the little boy goes through some antic, to make us look at him and see what smart things he can do. He does not know that we should think more and better of him if he kept still and behaved as he ought during our visit; but he thinks no one sees him unless he is the centre of all eyes and smiles. So he keeps on saying and doing things just to be seen. He puts himself before his mother, and wants her to stop talking, that he may talk or show himself off. He thinks more of himself than of his mother or of anyone else. He cries out: "See me! see what I am; what I can do!" He wants us to laugh at him as a wonder; to notice and praise him.

Did you ever see such a boy or girl? Can you call him by name? Is his name your name, I wonder? Think of it and see; for no one likes the boy or girl who thinks of self too highly.

This pride or desire shows itself in another way; as when a boy or girl is asked to do something, to read aloud, or to recite a piece, or to play on the organ or piano, and will not consent to do so without a great deal of urging. They begin to make excuses, and if at last they consent, they act as if they were thinking of self all the time, of how they look, or how they shall get through it, or what others will think of it. How much better to do the thing desired the best you can, without a single thought of self! Do not, therefore, think more highly of yourself than you ought to think.

Do you ask: "How can I help it?" Let me tell you, and I want you to learn and remember the rules I give:—

1. Think enough of yourself always to behave well in church, in school, at home, in the street, in company, everywhere. This is not thinking too highly of yourself.

2. Think enough of yourself to dress well, not richly, but in clean and suitable clothes. Be careful, then, not to soil your clothes, especially your best clothes. Keep them clean and fit for church.

3. Think enough of yourself to hear well. When you are talking with others, give them their full share in the conversation. Do not talk all the time yourself, as though what you say is all-important, and what they say is

of no importance. Hear what they say, and they will hear what you say. Turn about is fair play.

4. Think enough of yourself to see well. See what others do, and what they have. If you play at anything, see how the others play. Look at them, if you want them to look at you in the game.

5. Think more of your father and mother than of yourself. Your father is a king, your mother is a queen, and you should think more of making them happy, of pleasing them, than of your own comfort. Forget self and honour them. When they are talking, do not break in with your little words. Be still, and hear, and see.

6. Think of your teachers and clergy with love and respect, as knowing more than you do. Never fancy that you know too much to be taught. Think of your great ignorance, of what you do not know; and in the school and church you will not think of yourself more highly than you ought to think.

7. Think of God and your sins and you will think humbly, and soberly, and justly of yourself. You could not boast of yourself before God, for you have disobeyed Him. You need to ask Him to forgive you and to make you better. And when you feel this need, you are humble and sober, as God would have you be.

If you heed these rules you will not think more highly of yourself than you ought to think; for they teach you to think enough of yourself always to behave well, to dress suitably, to hear others talk, to see what they do, to place your parents above yourself, to love and respect your teachers, and to honour and fear God. These will cause you to think humbly and soberly of yourself, as you ought to think.—*Rev. A. Hastings Ross.*

Making the Best of Life

"*Cleave to that which is good.*"—*Rom. xii.* 9.

There is no question that, quite apart from the possession of material good, some persons manage to get a far larger share of satisfaction out of life than do others. Given corresponding circumstances they will be more happy in them, or—should the circumstances be adverse—will be less unhappy than their fellows. This may be attributed in part to temperament and disposition, but there is also given to each of us a power of direction and control, by the use or misuse of which we may make or mar our lives. For each of us there must be a possible *best*, yet how many of us are taking thought whether in the matter of usefulness or of happiness we are getting the highest return that life is capable of yielding.

A friend at the point of death once made a singular confession. It was not that she had wasted her opportunities of doing good, or had misused her abilities, but that she had not been as happy as she ought to have been, and, as she then perceived, as God had intended her to be.

In the season of eager youth we seldom anticipate failure, but expect all our undertakings, whether on our own behalf or for the good of others, to be eminently successful. We take little thought of the difficulties and disappointments which will in all probability beset our way. The lions in the path are doubtless but fabulous creations of olden time. Those who aspire only to a purposeless, butterfly style of existence will find in it no abiding satisfaction. Even those who set out wtih the loftiest aims and the wisest plans cannot tell what thwarting influences may conspire to force them out of the groove which they have marked for themselves. A great many young men go forth with slings and stones, but only the Davids overcome the giants.

So it may be worth while to consider what qualifications will enable us to extract the greatest amount of happiness from life as we go along, and leave the least cause for regret at the end.

Courage.—First among the virtues necessary to sustain a purposeful life must be placed *courage*. To most of us the "stiff brae" will at some time present itself, and to climb it the "stout heart" will be indispensable. It is by resolutely facing and overcoming difficulties that strength and wisdom are acquired. Youth may be tempted to prefer the soft sunny air, the smooth and sheltered path; but it is the keen wind of adversity that braces the moral and spiritual fibres, and the strenuous surmounting of obstacles that strengthens the soul. To the pressure of poverty, pain, danger, even to failure itself, the world owes the moulding of its finest natures—those who have given us the noblest thoughts, made the greatest discoveries, conferred the richest blessings on the suffering and unfortunate.

Success of a palpable kind cannot be achieved by all, but there is a higher success won by the brave soul that never acknowledges defeat, but through good report and through ill, maintains its own integrity of purpose, and is true to its ideas of duty while life lasts. If one plan fails, it falls back on another, and loss in one direction often means gain in another; if its outlook be curtailed, it adjusts itself to the new conditions—it learns to conquer fate because it has first learnt to conquer self.

Cheerfulness.—Another virtue worthy of cultivation as an aid to making the best of life is *cheerfulness*. Two girls who domiciled together were taking themselves to task, and arguing the question whether it was not wrong to be so little affected by the petty trials and disappointments to which they were subject. In their buoyancy of heart they were generally able to invest even disagreeable occurrences with a humorous interest, and thus to save themselves much unhappiness. "But," said one of them, "Are not these small cares and worries sent to us as part of life's discipline, and are we getting the spiritual good they were intended to bring us if we laugh and jest them away?" The girls had the wisdom to decide that it was their *duty* to be happy while the capacity for innocent pleasure was fresh within them, and not to anticipate life's burdens till the time came for bearing them.

There is a happy medium between frivolity and super-seriousness. There is a happy knack of letting disagreeables pass lightly by instead of inviting them to remain with us. Oftentimes nothing clears the air like a touch of humour or an innocent jest. A hearty laugh will often ward off ill-temper either in ourselves or others, for did not the wise man say, A merry heart doeth good like a medicine? Some of us have known instances where the loss of property or of some near and dear one has rendered a man sour and cynical, or has given a sullen distaste for all further companionship or pleasure. Because one good thing is lost the man has said, All is lost, he will take no further interest in his life. But all is never lost while the future remains, while the sun shines and the flowers bloom, while God's in His Heaven, and there is still God-like work to do on earth.

Contentment.—Contentment is sometimes regarded as the fitting resource only of the aged and broken, and those who have been worsted in the battle of life. The strong and vigorous talk of "a noble discontent" as if it were not possible to combine striving and contentment. Perhaps the simple countryman's philosophy of life was as good as any—"If we can't get better we'll be contented with what we've got." Contentment need not imply the placid acceptance of anything and everything that befalls us without caring or striving for better. Neither does it consist in merely resigning the unattainable unless there is also content with what remains. But to be content

to do our best in whatever circumstances we may be placed; content bravely to meet life's vicissitudes as they arise; to overcome difficulties as far as our powers permit; to endure with patience the ills that are irremediable; to be happy in the sunshine and not unhappy in the shade; to

> "Take whatever a good God sends
> With a trust complete,"

will redeem the most humble and insignificant life from failure. If such a life should be "Sad enough to be safe"; it will also be "Glad enough to be desirable."

HOPEFULNESS.—Hope has been called man's universal birthright. Take away hope, and how dreary would be the most successful career! However bare the present may be there is always the great storehouse of the future out of which all good things may come. "There are beautiful things out in the years; some of them are always for everybody," says Mrs Whitney. In the great future, either here or elsewhere, wrongs will be righted, aspirations will be realised, character will be perfected. Then when we better understand the Divine purposes we shall be glad to have lived and to have made the best of our lives.

A Bible Gem

"*Love is of God.*"—1 *John iv. 7.*

Among the truths in the Bible, as among the metals in the bosom of the earth, while all are useful, some are more precious than others. We may compare the Book of God to the wall of the New Jerusalem, the building of which is of jasper, while its foundations are garnished with all manner of precious stones. Many of these precious texts are well known to you. I wish, however, to bring before you something shorter than the shortest text in the Bible, a single word, which we may call the pearl of great price among the goodly pearls of the Book of God. Leaving out of view the names of God and of the Lord Jesus, what word shall we fix on? It is short; a word of one syllable, and only four letters. Its meaning, too, is very simple. The youngest of my readers can understand it. Indeed, I think a little child knows its meaning better than many a wise man. The word we are in search of is Love. Now, I am to hold up this jewel to you in four different settings.

FIRST, AS A GREAT REVELATION.—What is God? That is the greatest question that any mind can ask. It is the question which men have been putting all through the ages, but which the wisest have not been able to answer. Men have never by searching found out God. God cannot be known till He reveals Himself. He has done it! If you would see all that can be known of God centred in one person, you must look to Jesus Christ. To one of His Apostles who said to Him, "Show us the Father," He replied, "Have I been so long a time with thee, and yet hast thou not known Me? he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." And now if we would gather into one word all that Jesus by word and deed taught of God, that one word is Love. To the great question, What is God? the shortest and simplest answer is the three words of 1 John iv. 8—"God is Love." Yes, Love! And that it is so seems plain to the Apostle, who adds just after the great revelation above quoted: "Herein is love . . . that God loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

A year or two ago a river in a French valley swollen by floods of rain overflowed its banks, swept over gardens and fields, and into houses, and

spread ruin and death far and wide. A mother clasping her child in one hand and clinging with the other to a piece of floating wreck, was borne by the current against a slender tree. Letting go her frail support, she seized a branch, and managed to climb with her precious burden up the quivering and yielding stem. But, alas! bending beneath the weight, it threatened every moment to break. It was too weak to give safety to both mother and child. The mother hastily wound a shawl round the child, made it fast to the stem well out of flood range, kissed her darling, let go her hold, and disappeared in the foaming torrent, dying to save a life that was dearer than her own. As we look through our tears at that devoted mother, we say, Herein is love. If this is the way mothers feel and act to their children—if they so value them, care for them, live for them, die for them, then mother is just another word for love. A true mother is love. That French child, if she lives, will never think of that tree in the flood without feeling this. And when we think of God giving His Son, and of Jesus giving Himself, that we might not perish, but have everlasting life, we must say with the Apostle, Herein is love. God is Love.

SECOND—A GREAT COMMANDMENT.—We find our gem now in another setting. As we have looked at it we have seen what God is. We look again, and it tells us what we ought to be. To the great revelation we add the great commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Matt. xxii. 37-39.) Thou shalt love—that is God's law. It is not hard to love. A child's heart is full of love. If God asked you to give large sums of money like Barnabas, or to preach like Paul, you would say, "I cannot." But when He says, "Thou shalt love." He asks only what you can give, for you are rich in love. And love in your heart is not like gold in a mine, which may be all worked out, but like water in a spring well, which is always flowing in from beneath as it overflows above. It ought to be easy for us to love Him Who is Love, and Who so loved us as to give His Son for us. And it should not be very difficult to love others, when God so loves both us and them. And yet you feel you do not love as you should. "The fruit of the Spirit is love." Pray that the Holy Spirit may renew your heart, and incline it to keep this good law.

THE THIRD SETTING OF OUR GEM IS IN A GREAT QUESTION.—Jesus said to Peter, who had denied Him, when they met after the Resurrection at the Sea of Galilee, "Simon, lovest thou Me?" He puts the same question to you. By the well of Jacob, He said to the woman, "Give Me to drink." Though He knows no weariness now, He still thirsts for the love of His people.

A dying boy whose heart was full of the love of Jesus, and who knew he would soon be with Him in Heaven, drew to him his father, who was weeping by his bed, and who was not a believer, and said in a soft earnest whisper. "Father, what shall I say to Jesus is the reason why you do not love Him?" I put that question to you. Have you a good reason? You cannot say, He does not love me. No! that would not be true. Nor can you say, He does not care for my love. Does your mother care for it? Jesus values it, even more than she does. The children's hosannas are sweeter to Him than the anthems of Angels. Out of the mouths of the little ones, "thou hast perfected praise." And again, you cannot say you have no love for anyone. Do you not love father and mother, and brothers and sisters, and friends? There is no reason, there cannot be a reason, why you should not love the Lord Jesus Christ. Will you not then put our gem in

A Fourth Setting—A Great Confession, Peter's, and also yours? "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee."

—*Rev. R. Taylor.*

Bear Ye One Another's Burdens

"*Bear ye one another's burdens.*"—*Gal. vi.* 2.

Those of you who have read Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," will remember that, when Christian left the City of Destruction, he was in a very sorry plight. "Clothed with rags, his face from his house, a book in his hand, and a great *burden* on his back." As he read the book he wept and trembled and, in the depth of his misery, cried out, "What shall I do?" What was the cause of this misery? The burden on his back. He felt that if he could not get rid of the burden it would sink him lower than the grave into eternal misery. That burden was sin. All are sinners. Every man, woman, and child is a sinner; but, alas, everyone is not sensible of it. And sin is so heavy a burden, that if it be not removed by pardoning mercy it must sink the sinner into eternal ruin. God is a just God, and as such must punish sin. The punishment of sin is death—eternal death. There has never been but One Person that could sustain the mighty load of sin. That Person was without sin Himself. The Scriptures say of Him that He was "harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. He did no evil, neither was guile found in His mouth." That Person is Jesus. Jesus is His proper name. The Angel that appeared to Joseph said, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins." For this very purpose Jesus took upon Himself our nature, and became man. He came into the world to save sinners. The prophet Isaiah says, "He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, and the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. He was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of My people was He stricken." And the Apostle Peter says of Him, "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree." No one else could sustain the burden of sin. David, the man after God's own heart, says of his own sins, "All my sins have gone over my head, as a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me." What an unspeakable mercy, Jesus not only could, but actually did bear, for every child of God, the punishment due to sin. And as Jesus was the only One that could bear the burden of sin; so He alone can remove it. Christian experienced this. He left the City of Destruction, and travelled toward the Celestial City, and tried by various means to get rid of his burden. He left his old companions, discontinued his former evil practices, tried to keep the law of God, did all he could, but all that he did, did not remove the burden. It is the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, that cleanseth from sin. Nothing but this will do it. The application of the blood of Jesus removes sin from the conscience, and gives peace and joy. Jesus says, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." When a sinner, by faith, looks to Jesus as the serpent-bitten Israelites looked at the brazen serpent, and believes that there is redemption in His blood, even the forgiveness of sins; and, by faith, rests upon Jesus as his Saviour, then the burden of sin is removed from his conscience, and he has joy and peace in believing.

But there are many things that may be termed burdens. You know that a burden is a load or weight that oppresses and troubles those who have to carry it. Any trouble a person has, is a burden to him. His mind or soul is oppressed by it. Affliction is a burden—poverty is a burden—persecution

is a burden—any trouble whatever is a burden. The Word of God directs us what to do when we have any burden. It does not bid us go and tell our friends and neighbours of our trouble. Neither does it direct us to be so mean-spirited as to cast it upon others, and because we are unhappy to make them unhappy too. It thus admonishes us. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee." That is by prayer tell Him all our troubles and ask deliverance from Him, and resting on His promises *expect* it. Like David, who says, "This poor man cried and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." David had many troubles or *burdens*, but he was saved from all of them. May the Lord help us in our troubles not to

"Fill a fellow creature's ear
With the sad tale of all our care."

But rather go to Jesus and tell Him. "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

But although Jesus only is the burden-bearer of sin, and though we should not attempt to cast our troubles on others, but as directed cast them upon the Lord; yet if we see anyone oppressed by any trouble, we should help them bear their burden. How can we do this? Job knew how to do it for he says that he "was eyes to the blind, that he made the widow's heart to sing for joy, that he delivered the poor and fatherless, and that the blessing of Him that was ready to perish came upon him." And if we, by rendering assistance of any kind to others; if we sympathise with them in their troubles, or help them in any way, then we help to bear their burdens.

A few days since, in walking up one of the streets of the metropolis, I noticed a lad carrying a box. It was evidently too heavy for him to carry. The perspiration trickled down his forehead, and his legs trembled under him as he tried. Still, with manly pride and determined courage, he persevered in the effort. Presently another lad, bright, intelligent, and kindly disposed, came along, wheeling a barrow. Perceiving the former lad's difficulty, he thus accosted him, "That box is too heavy for you to carry, you are going the same road as I am, put the box on the barrow and let me wheel it for you. Come, let me help you; it will ease you and do me no harm." This was done, and the lads passed on together blithe and cheerful. "No harm?" Certainly not. Ah, that lad knew how to help to bear another's burden.

A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. At that time Jericho was a large and thriving city. It was about nineteen miles from Jerusalem. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho led through a wild and dreary country, and the rocks and caves on the roadside so swarmed with robbers that it was dangerous to travel that way. The man referred to travelled along that road. At length, when he reached a certain spot, some thieves rushed out of their hiding-place, fell upon him, stripped him of his raiment, and so wounded him as to leave him half-dead; probably they thought he was dead. What a pitiable condition the poor man was in? Covered with wounds, helpless, and no friend near to help him. Some time after this had happened, a fellow-countryman, a priest, one of all others who ought to have taken compassion on him, passed that way. Surely he went and spoke kindly to him, and rendered all the assistance he could. No, he did not. He saw the pitiable condition the man was in, but kept at as great a distance from him as he could—he passed by on the other side. Soon afterwards a Levite, an assistant of the priests, passed that way. He stopped and looked at the poor man—saw the condition he was in, but instead of rendering assistance, passed by on the other side. Presently a Samaritan, in his journey,

came that way. Now the poor man was a Jew, and the Jews and Samaritans were bitter enemies, so much so that they had no dealings with each other. Yet when the Samaritan saw the wounded man, he had compassion on him, spoke kindly to him, bound up his wounds, poured in oil and wine to heal his wounds, set him on his own beast, took him to an inn, took care of him, remained with him all night, and in the morning, before he went away, paid the host, and arranged with him to take care of the poor man, promising that, whatever the expenses might be, when he came that way again he would pay them. Which of these knew how to bear another's burden? Not the priest nor the Levite, but the Samaritan. And the admonition Jesus gave to the lawyer to whom He spake this parable is equally applicable to us—"Go ye and do likewise." Bear ye one another's burden. Whenever you see any persons in distressed circumstances requiring aid, and can help them, do so.

"Walter," said a gentleman to a poor crippled boy, "how is it, when you cannot walk, that your shoes get so worn out?" After hesitating a moment, Walter replied, "My mother has younger children, sir, and while she is out washing I amuse them by creeping about on the floor and playing with them." Walter is a good lad, and any service of love that he can render towards bearing another's burden Walter is willing to do.

Our Blessed Lord, just before His betrayal, took water in a basin and a towel, and washed and wiped His disciples' feet. After doing so, he exhorted them to humility and charity, saying, "Ye call Me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you." The Apostle Peter says, "Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow in His steps." Now Jesus went about doing good. To instruct the ignorant, to feed the hungry, to visit the sick, to sympathise with the distressed, to help the helpless, to comfort the sorrowful, to weep with the bereaved, are some of the examples Jesus set us. We follow the example when we bear one another's burdens, and, as we have opportunity, do good to others. Those who have ability to help others, and do not, give but very poor evidence, if any at all, of being the children of God. The Apostle John says, "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother hath need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" A real child of God is desirous of comforting those that are in any trouble with the comfort wherewith he himself hath been comforted of God. True, there is nothing in all we may do that can possibly be meritorious. Notwithstanding for Jesus' sake there is a reward attached to it. Jesus says, "Whosoever giveth a cup of cold water to a disciple in the name of a disciple shall in no wise lose his reward." A tree is known by its fruit. An evil tree produces evil fruit. A good tree good fruit. You may know the tree when you see the fruit. Just in the same way it becomes evident what a person is by his doings. And even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure and whether it be right. Jesus says that at the last great day, it shall be said to them at His right hand, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, for I was hungry, and ye gave Me meat; thirsty, and ye gave Me drink; naked, and ye clothed Me; sick and in prison, and ye visited Me; for inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me." These are some of the evidences of their being the children of God; and that the Kingdom of Heaven is prepared for them.

Critical Notes on the Epistle

Abhor that which is evil.—Not merely keep from doing wrong, but hate sin with the whole soul. We are not completely good, till all evil, even of thought, is loathsome and repulsive to us. All sin is mean as well as wicked. *Cleave to that which is good.* This is the only way to show that our loathing of evil is sincere. A negative goodness, that spends more time in hating evil than in cleaving to good, is a very weak and imperfect goodness. Cleaving to the good will keep us from the censorious, fault-finding habit, which is often worse than the evils criticised.

"Abhor" and "cleave to" are put in contrast, but are manifestations of the same spirit, as electricity attracts and repels with precisely the same force accordingly as the object to which it is presented is charged with the same or different currents.

Be kindly affectioned.—The word rendered "kindly affectioned" implies closeness of family affection, like that between parents and children. The word "kindly" implying this kind, was originally "kinned," belonging to kindred. *In honour preferring one another.* Or, more exactly, "preceding one another," "going before one another in giving honour." Be foremost in giving honour to others, and not seeking it yourselves.

One of the first lessons I learned in my work was that if I would succeed I must let others have the honour, must put them on the throne, while I was the unseen power behind the throne. It is not the figurehead on the bow, but the unseen screw beneath the water, that makes the steamship go. For all who desire to see the cause of Christ prosper, the advice "In honour preferring one another" is the "open sesame" to success; while one of the greatest dangers in the Church is the seeking of honour for ourselves. That is the rock on which many a noble cause has been wrecked.

Heart Virtues (vers. 11-13).—*Not slothful in business.* Rev. Ver. *in diligence.* The reference, according to nearly all commentators, is to diligence, zeal, and includes earthly and spiritual duties. Whatever we do, let it be done with our might. Be not a laggard in any duty. Some are diligent in business, but not in religion; some in religion, and not in business. Both are wrong. *Fervent* (boiling) *in spirit.* The reverse of the previous exhortation, both of which apply to *serving the Lord.* In whatever you do, in play, in work, in religion. The whole life is transformed by doing all things for him.

> "A servant with this clause
> Makes drudgery divine;
> Who sweeps a room as for thy laws
> Makes that and the action fine."—*Herbert.*

There is another reading given in the Rev. Ver. margin, *serving the opportunity.* The principal letters in the words for *Lord* and *time* are the same, so that the words, if abbreviated, could be easily mistaken. The meaning then would be, do everything at the right time, neither too soon nor too late, for

> "There is a tide in the affairs of men,
> Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
> Omitted, all the voyage of their life
> Is bound in shallows and in miseries."

Still there is a good deal of doubt as to this reading, both as to the authority

and the value of the advice. "The Christian should improve the opportunity, but not serve it."

Rejoicing in hope.—Because the Christian hope is so glorious. If we have a clear, definite Christian hope, we cannot help rejoicing. A dim hope clouds the joy. *Patient in tribulation.* This will be most easy when we rejoice in hope. There is always a door of hope to tribulation.

Illustration.—Bunyan's Christian in the Slough of Despond; and Giant Despair's Doubting Castle.

Continuing instant, steadfastly, persevering; in prayer, as the means of communication with God, the source of all spiritual supply.

Illustrations.—Keeping open the water-pipes between the reservoir and our houses; or the electric current between the electric plant and our light fixtures.

Distributing, etc.—Sharing whatever we have with God's people. *Given to hospitality.* Literally, "pursuing hospitality." "He does not say doing it, but given to it, so as to instruct us not to wait for those that shall ask it, and see when they will come to us, but to run to them, and be given to finding them."—*Chrysostom.*

Example.—Hebrews (xiii. 2) refers probably to Abraham as entertaining Angels unawares (Gen. xviii. 1, etc.); so did the Shunammite (2 Kings iv. 8); and the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings xvii. 10). See 1 Tim. iii. 2; v. 10; 1 Pet. iv. 9; 3 John v. viii.

Duties toward Bad People (ver. 14).—The transition is most natural from pursuing hospitality to being pursued by evil-minded men. This is a quotation from the Sermon on the Mount. Paul well knew what he was advising, for he had had many an opportunity of practising his own precept. "The Christian is to wish for and to pray for good to everyone. He is never to wish for or to pray for evil to any." "He did not say, be not spiteful or revengeful, but required something far better. For that a man which was wise might do, but this is quite an Angel's part." In that, thou bringest forth a very great sign of love to Christ. "They that persecute us are purveyors of a reward to us."—*Chrysostom.* "This precept is more fully explained in verses 20, 21 (the same in Prov. xxv. 21, 22), where the duty is set forth of overcoming evil with good. Indeed there is no other way. To fight evil with evil simply doubles the evil. The "heaping coals of fire on the head" of enemies is not the object but only the result of returning good for evil. He that returns good for evil for the purpose of "burning" his enemy, does not really give good for evil, and there will be no good result. But the only vengeance a Christian can take on anyone is this. You try to kill your enemy by making him your friend. You do that which tends to burn out the evil spirit within him.

Illustration.—"Whatever anyone does or says, I must be good and true, as though the gold, or the purple, or the emerald were always saying thus: 'Whatever happens I must be emerald and keep my colour.'"—*Marcus Aurelius.*

Rejoice, etc.—Love produces not only the forgiveness of enemies, but a general sympathy in the joys and sorrows of our fellow-men, and especially of our fellow-Christians.

Illustration.—An Arctic explorer was once asked whether, during eight months of slow starvation which he and his comrades endured, they suffered much from the pangs of hunger. "No," he answered, "we lost them in the sense of abandonment, in the feeling that our countrymen had forgotten us and were not coming to the rescue."—*Geo. Adam Smith.*

Anecdotes and Illustrations

What Came of a Kind Deed.—The following incident is told of Madame Malibran, a famous singer who lived some seventy years ago. She was sitting in her room in a London hotel, very weary, when word was brought that a little lad wished to see her, and she allowed him to be admitted. A little flaxen-haired fellow of some ten years timidly entered the room, and taking a roll of paper from his pocket, said: "Madame, everybody tells me that you are so good, so very good to the poor. I do not come to beg, Madame, though we are so poor that my dear mamma, who is very ill, has to do without both food and medicine. I thought if you would sing my little song at one of your concerts perhaps somebody would buy it, and I could get the wine and medicine the doctor has ordered." Tears stood in his eyes as he made his request, and as Madame Malibran took the manuscript and rapidly hummed the lines over, they rolled slowly down his cheeks. "Did you write this music, a little child like you?" "Yes, Madame?" The lady took from her purse a coin and a card and pressed them into the boy's hand. "Run home as quickly as you can," she said, "and get for your mother all she needs, and this evening come to my concert, to which the ticket will admit you." Pierre did as he was told, and when evening came he went to the theatre, presented his ticket, and was taken to a seat away down near the stage. The lights, the warmth, and the bright colours, to say nothing of the crowd of handsomely dressed gentlemen and ladies, bewildered and dazzled him, and he could only think, "Oh, if mamma were but here, I should be so happy!" Presently he glanced at the platform, and there stood his lovely lady. She began to sing, and little Pierre's heart throbbed as if it would burst as the familiar notes of his own little song fell upon his ears. Its simple melody touched the audience too, and it was sung again, and at its close the house rang with applause. How the rest of the concert passed Pierre never knew. He stayed until it was all over, and then hurried home and told his wonderful news. Several days after, Madame Malibran called upon Pierre's mother and told her that a London publisher had offered £300 for the song, which offer she had accepted, and pouring into the astonished woman's lap a pile of notes and gold, said, "Madame, your son will one day be a great composer. Thank God for the gift He has given him." Pierre and his sick mother mingled their tears and thanks to one who seemed to them like an Angel sent from Heaven. With the money thus obtained Pierre was enabled to pursue his musical studies, and in after years verified the great singer's prediction, and became one of the most talented composers of his day.

A King Learning Kindness.—A certain king in the East was noted for his cruelty, so that he was much more dreaded than loved by his people. One day, after he had been out hunting, and returned, he caused an officer to publish that he, the king, was now sensible of his faults, and henceforth meant to rule his subjects with justice and gentleness. He kept his promise so faithfully that they gave him the surname of The Just. Some years afterward, one of his favourite ministers took occasion to ask him what had so soon brought about that great change in his conduct. The king, with much kindness, thus explained it: "You may remember I had been out to hunt, just before making the public promise of better government. One of the dogs strayed from the pack to chase a fox, and bit him through the bone of the leg. The poor fox went limping to his hole and the dog set off at full speed to rejoin the pack. One of my footmen wantonly threw stones at the dog, and broke his leg. A

runaway horse, passing by at the time, mistook the motion of the man's arm for an attempt to catch him, and therefore kicked out, and broke the footman's leg; and the horse, frightened at the shout that was raised, dashed off to a wood, slipped his foot into a hole, and got his leg broken. Here was a chain of retribution. I was forcibly struck at seeing how each was paid back for his deed of violence, and it set me to thinking what a load of evil I was heaping up that should fall one day upon my own head. It was this reflection that, by the will of God, worked such a great and instant change in my conduct." Thus it is in our lives. No one can do a cruel or unjust, or even foolish, action, without suffering, sooner or later, the pains that surely spring from his folly or sin. If you sow the seed of thistles or brambles, do not wonder that, when they are grown, your hands are stung and torn in grasping them.

The Atmosphere of Love.—An ingenious apparatus for extinguishing fire may be seen in many large buildings. It is so constructed that at the alarm being given it can be made to evolve large volumes of a gas that will not support combustion, the result being that the flames, unable to live, are speedily overcome. Every Christian should radiate such an atmosphere of love that bickerings, strife, and evil passions cannot live in it.

The Best Defence.—It is said that bees and wasps usually will not sting a person whose skin is imbued with honey. Hence those who are exposed to the venom of these little creatures, when they have occasion to hive bees and take a nest of wasps, smear their face and hands with honey, which is found to be the best preservative. Our best defence against insult or injury is to have the spirit bathed in honey; every part saturated with meekness, gentleness, forbearance and patience, and the most spiteful enemy will be disappointed in his endeavour to sting. We shall remain uninjured, and the honey with which he comes in contact will neutralise his hatred, and the good return for evil "overcome evil with good."

Always Helping.—A beautiful tribute was paid to Sir Bartle Frere by his wife. Going to the railway station to meet her husband, she took with her a servant who had never seen him. "You must go and look for Sir Bartle," she ordered. "But," answered the nonplussed servant, "how shall I know him?" "Oh," said Lady Frere, "look for a tall gentleman helping someone." The description was sufficient for the quick-witted man. He found Sir Bartle Frere helping an old lady out of a railway carriage, and knew he fitted the description.

Serving God with a Cheerful Spirit.—When the poet Carpani inquired of his friend Haydn how it happened that his church music was always so cheerful, the great composer replied, "I cannot make it otherwise: I write according to the thoughts I feel. When I think upon God, my heart is so full of joy that the notes dance and leap, as it were, from my pen; and since God has given me a cheerful heart, it will be pardoned that I serve Him with a cheerful spirit."

Love.—Behold charity, glowing with social tenderness, and full of goodwill to all mankind. To the needy it is beneficent; to the wretched it is pitiful; with the bad it is patient; of the impenitent it is hopeful. It envies not the great; is not jealous of the prosperous; to superiors is respectful, and to inferiors ever courteous. It is no boaster, nor lover of praise, nor self-seeker. It does good as if "by stealth, and blushes to find it fame." It is not imperious nor petulant; neither cringes to the strong nor seeks to crush the weak. It is no swift-footed tale-bearer, no ill-natured gossip; no busybody intermeddling with other men's concerns, is charity. It likes well to praise openly; but it does not go to the housetop to proclaim offences. Its hand is slow to smite, loath to deal a blow, and, if it must, it wounds tenderly, never barbing its

arrowheads, nor dipping their points in poison. Its self-denying labours abound; ever afoot on errands of mercy, or on some emprise of philanthropy, it grudges no toil, is fatigued yet wearies not, endures all amount of hardship, wills to part with its best-prized possessions, and counts it no expense, be the outlay ever so great, if it only succeed in making one sad heart glad, or one happy heart still more happy.—*Traill.*

Overcome Evil with Good.—A little girl, with great delight, showed her mother some fruit which had been given her. The mother said the friend was very kind and had given her a great many. "Yes," said the child, "very, indeed; and she gave me more than these, but I have given some away." The mother inquired to whom she had given them, when she answered: "I gave them to a girl who pushes me off the path and makes faces at me." On being asked why she gave them to her, she replied: "Because I thought it would make her know that I wish to be kind to her, and she will not, perhaps, be unkind to me again." How admirably did she thus obey the command "overcome evil with good!"

Noble Revenge.—An officer on one occasion most unjustly reprimanded a private soldier. The man turned to him and said, "Sir, I will make you regret this." Some time after the officer needed a man to undertake a most dangerous task. A young man from the ranks volunteered, and carried out the work most successfully. The feelings of the officer may be imagined when he saw that it was the same man whom he had so unjustly treated. "Sir," said the noble fellow, "I told you before I would make you regret it."

Kindness.—Daniel Webster went from his country home to Boston to study law. He entered without invitation the office of Christopher Gore, then at the head of Massachusetts bar. He was regarded as an intruder, and nobody paid him any attention. One day Rufus King saw the solitary student, and shook him warmly by the hand, and said: "I knew your father well. Be studious and you will win. If you want any advice or assistance, come to me." Webster said, when he was sixty years old, that he still felt the warm pressure of that hand.

Kindness Remembered.—A good man kept a diary in which he recorded every act of kindness. He preserved this record of friendship lest his memory should prove treacherous and these kindly offers never be requited; and he exhorted his children to remember when he should be no more all those to whom he owed a debt of gratitude for their kindness. Have we any debts of gratitude unpaid? Are there any who befriended our parents in times of need to whom we should show the kindness of God?

Forgiving One Another.—An Irish girl and a Yorkshire girl in a large boarding-school were rivals. They had quick tempers and were continually at war. Jenny, the Yorkist, one day received an orange from her teacher. She slipped it secretly into the Irish girl's desk, who tried in vain to discover the donor. Passing Jenny, she said, "It's no use to ask you, you're too ill-natured." That night a little white-robed figure crept into Jenny's bed, and the moon looked silently down on the "detestable Irish girl" and the "stupid Yorkshire girl" locked in each other's arms.

"As We Forgive."—Leonardo da Vinci, when he was painting the "Last Supper," indulged his hatred of a man who had injured him, by painting his face as Judas. After that he could not possibly get the face of the Lord to come as he wanted it. At last he saw that he had been wrong, and painted an imaginary face over the Judas, and the next day he was able to realise his ideal of the face of the Lord. Cherished wrong hides God's face.

Ingratitude.—At the Battle of the Alma, in September, 1854, a wounded Russian was calling piteously for water. Captain Eddington, whose heart was

kind and charitable, ran up to him, and, stooping, gave him the much-desired beverage. The wounded man revived, the captain ran forward to join his regiment, when the wretch who had just been restored by his kindness fired, and shot him who had been his friend in the time of need.

KINDNESS ITS OWN REWARD.—Robert Raikes tells the following story of a scene at a "Robin Dinner." One hungry little fellow, having no ticket, was vainly trying to pass the barrier, and, full of disappointment, burst into tears. Some lads going by pleaded for him on the ground that he had neither father nor mother. They gained their object, and as they left the scene of action, unfed themselves, it would have been a picture for the Academy if an artist could have depicted the glowing faces of the boys as they exclaimed, with triumphant glee, "*We got him in.*"

NOT SLOTHFUL.—There was no feature more remarkable in the character of Timour than his extraordinary perseverance. No difficulties ever led him to recede from what he had once undertaken; and he often persisted in his efforts under circumstances which led all around him to despair. On such occasions he used to relate to his friends an anecdote of his early life. "I once," he said, "was forced to take shelter from my enemies in a ruined building, where I sat alone for many hours. Desiring to divert my mind from my hopeless condition, I fixed my eyes on an ant, that was carrying a grain of corn larger than itself up a high wall. I numbered the efforts it made to accomplish this object. The grain fell sixty-nine times to the ground; but the insect *persevered*, and the seventieth time it reached the top. This sight gave me courage at the moment, and I never forgot the lesson."—*Malcolm's* "Persia."

CHARLES XII.—It is astonishing to see with what perseverance and inflexibility of purpose those men have pursued the object, the pursuit and attainment of which constituted their greatness. Charles XII. was frequently on his horse for twenty-four hours at once; and thus he traversed most of his dominions. His officers were all tired out; consequently, for the most part, he performed these journeys entirely alone. On one of these excursions his poor horse fell dead under him. Without any uneasiness, the monarch stripped the dead horse, and marched off with the saddle, bridle, and pistols on his back. At the next inn he found a horse in the stable to his mind, and immediately harnessed him, and was just making off, when the owner came out, and called him to account for stealing his property. The monarch replied, that he took the horse because he was tired of carrying the saddle himself. This not satisfying the owner, they drew swords, and would have shed blood, royal or plebeian, had not the guard rode up and informed the owner that his sword was raised against his king. This was but a single specimen of the untiring perseverance with which that ambitious man carried out his plans. The same perseverance would place almost any student on a high eminence in a very few years.

"IN HONOUR PREFERRING ONE ANOTHER."—At a Sunday-school anniversary, two little girls presented themselves to receive the prize, one of whom had recited one verse more than the other, both having learned a large number of verses of Scripture. The gentleman who presided inquired, "And could you not have learned one verse more, and thus have kept up with Martha?" "Yes, sir," the blushing child replied; "but I loved Martha, *and I kept back on purpose.*" "And was there any one of all the verses you have learned," again inquired the president, "that taught you that lesson?" "There was, sir," she answered, blushing still more deeply—"'In honour preferring one another.'"

Questions on the Epistle

1. Who wrote this Epistle? 2. To whom was it written? 3. For what purpose was it written? 4. What is this chapter about? 5. What is the key-note of the passage? 6. What does Paul say about gifts? 7. Repeat as many as you can of Paul's precepts for Christian living?

Books of Reference

"Romans" in Century Bible; "Cambridge Bible"; "Expositor's Bible"; "Biblical Illustrator"; "Biblical Elucidator"; "Lectures on the Epistle" by *Chalmers* and *Fry*; *Dale's* "Laws of God for Common Life."

General Subjects

Signals

I stayed the other night with a gentleman who was for many years the manager of one of the busiest railway lines in the kingdom, and naturally we got talking about railways. And from talking about railways in general, we fell to talking about the various rather terrible accidents that have taken place of late.

Now, as you children all know, the running of our trains is regulated by signals. Signal-boxes are planted at certain regular intervals along the line, and I believe the rule is that no train is allowed to enter any one section of railway until that section is quite clear. Let me illustrate what I mean. There is a signal-box at the Central Station and there is another, I believe, at Boscombe. Now suppose there was a train somewhere on the bit of line between the Central and Boscombe; well, the train that might be following it would be stopped at the Central. The signals would be against it. And not until the train in front had cleared Boscombe would the train standing at the Central Station be allowed to proceed. There can only be one train in any section at any one time, and therefore if the signals are properly worked, collisions ought to be practically impossible. And let me say this, some of us who travel a good deal ought to be grateful to the man in the signal-box. We owe our safety to his skill and care. The marvel is, not that sometimes a signalman makes a mistake, but that mistakes occur so very seldom.

Well, now, the terrible accident at Hawes Junction, and the equally terrible accident at Pontypridd, were both the result of mistakes. In both cases the signalman forgot something. At Hawes, he forgot that he had two light engines standing in the section, and so he signalled "all clear" to the Scotch express, with the result it smashed into those two engines and wrecked itself with sad loss of life. At Pontypridd the signalman turned a passenger train on to a certain line, forgetting there was a heavy coal train already on it. I have no doubt, as my friend told me on Thursday, that in course of time accidents of this kind will be made absolutely impossible, for someone is sure to invent a contrivance by which it will become impossible for a signalman to put his signals at "all clear" so long as a train remains in the section.

Now, my dear children, we make the journey of life by signals, and we can

only make it safely by watching them and obeying them. If you ask me who the signalman is who sets the signals for you and me, I should answer, *Conscience*. You know what I mean by conscience; it is that little voice within which says, "Right," "Wrong"; "Yes," "No"; "Do this," "Don't do that." Now if we always watch for the signals, I do not think we shall come to any harm. That is when people get into trouble, when they do things, although the little voice says, "Don't." I am quite sure that when a boy is tempted to tell a lie, the little voice says, "Don't." I am quite sure that when evil companions invite him to go with them to certain evil places, the little voice says "Don't." The signal is set at "danger." But some foolish people take no notice of the signal, they pay no heed to conscience, and they pay for their folly in trouble and disaster. So, watch for the signals! Never do what conscience forbids! "So did not I," Nehemiah says of himself, "because of the fear of God." The signal was at "danger," and he pulled up. But if conscience says "all clear," you can go ahead. They that follow the voice of conscience, which is the voice of Christ within, never stumble, because they have the light of life.

Watch the signals yourselves, and *give the right signals to others.* In a sense we are all of us signalmen. Other people watch us and follow us. Take care, dear boys and girls, you do not signal them on the wrong line! You see what terrible trouble issued from a wrong signal at Hawes and Pontypridd. And equally sad results follow from wrong signals which men and women, boys and girls, give to one another. Many a boy has come to his ruin because he followed the wrong signal. His foolish companions told him it was all right to go to the public-house and the theatre and all the rest of it; they signalled "all clear" for him, and so he rushed on to ruin and death. Beware of giving the wrong signal. Lesser boys and younger girls watch what you do; be sure you put them on the right line. "He made it easy to be good," they said of Clerk Maxwell at Cambridge. He was always signalling people on to the right line. You must try to do the same! It would be a terrible thing if a brother or sister or little friend came to trouble and ruin because you put him or her on the wrong line. Ask God to keep you from putting a stumbling-block in your brother's way. Ask Him to help you to lead your little companions straight. And the sure way to lead others straight is to follow Christ yourself.—*Rev. J. D. Jones, M.A., B.D.*

Little by Little

"*By little and little.*"—*Ex. xxiii.* 30.

The rule of the text holds good in our efforts to secure an education, and in every department of worldly advancement.

Very small things also occasion the greatest harm.

A gnat choked Pope Adrian to death, which caused wonderful changes in the nation and history of the whole world.

A counsellor of Rome was strangled by a hair in the milk which he drank. This event caused the most serious results of anything that ever transpired in his family.

Anacreon, one of the lyric poets, is said to have lost his life by swallowing the skin of a raisin. The world then lost one of the most illustrious poets and writers.

A destructive war between France and England was occasioned by a quarrel between two boy princes.

The "Grasshopper War," which took place about the time the Pilgrims went to New England in the *Mayflower*, between two Indian tribes, was

brought about in this way: An Indian woman, with her son, went to visit a friend belonging to another tribe. The little fellow caught a large grasshopper on the road, and carried it with him. A lad from the other tribe wanted it, but he refused to give it up. A quarrel ensued, which soon drew the fathers and mothers into the dispute, and ere long the chiefs were engaged in a war which nearly exterminated one tribe.

Several centuries ago, some soldiers of Modena carried away a bucket from a public well at Bologna, which was the cause of a long war; and the King of Sardinia was imprisoned for twenty-two years, when he died.

An English and French vessel had a quarrel about which should be supplied first from a certain well of water, which induced a war that cost 1000 lives.

The great philosopher, Newton, saw a child playing with soap bubbles, which led him to his most important discoveries in optical instruments.

Stephen Montgolfier saw a shirt waving when hung before the fire, from which he first conceived the idea of a balloon.

When Galileo was in the metropolitan temple of Peria, he observed the oscillations of a lamp; and this was the first conception of a correct method of measuring time.

The introduction of the telescope is due to a little boy playing with spectacle glasses.

The art of printing was suggested by a man cutting the letters of his name on the bark of a tree and impressing them on paper. By this accidental circumstance we have books printed in good legible type on almost any and every subject sought by the human mind.

"Uncle," said Tom one day, "it seems to me your things don't look as well as they might." They were in the garden, and "the things" the boy had his eyes on were the currant bushes.

"I don't expect they do," replied his uncle; "I'm no great hand at a garden. Well, sir, what can you improve?"

"I can try on the currants," said Tom. "They want to be trimmed out and the wood cut off, and the right suckers trained. Don't you never dig around them, and put ashes on the roots?"

His uncle had never done these things; did not know that they ought to be done. He thought, he said, "currants took care of themselves."

"But they can be cared for," said Tom, "and do all the better."

"Suppose you try, boy," said his uncle.

His uncle did not believe much would come of it, but he had reason to change his mind. Much did come of it. All at once, it seemed to him, for time goes fast to an old man, his bushes were loaded with fruit, fine large currants, such as his garden had not seen for many a day, if ever before. People, when they walked into the garden, exclaimed, "What splendid currants you have!"

"That boy knows how to take care of his gold-dust," said his uncle often to himself, and sometimes aloud.

Tom went to college, and every account they heard of him, he was going ahead, laying a solid foundation for the future.

"Certainly," said his uncle, "certainly That boy, I tell you, knows how to take care of his gold-dust."

"Gold-dust!" Where did he get gold-dust? He was a poor boy. He had not been to California. He never was a miner. Where did he get gold-dust? Ah! he has *seconds* and *minutes*, and these are the gold-dust of time —specks and particles of time, which boys and girls and grown-up people are apt to waste and throw away. Tom knew their value. His father, or minister

had taught him that every speck and particle of time was worth its weight in gold; and his son took care of them as if they were. He never spent them foolishly, but only in good bargains; "for value received" was stamped on all he passed away. Take care of your gold-dust.

"By little and little," is the true secret of gaining knowledge.

Some of you may remember the story of the two boys who went over the same route, the one with his eyes open, and the other with them shut. What was true of these boys, is true also of many more besides.

A very busy man who had very little time for reading, or study, was asked by a friend how it happened that he knew so much more than other people. "Oh," said he, "I never had time to lay in a regular stock of learning, so I save all the bits that come in my way, and they count up in the course of the year."

One sometimes observes an intelligent boy, who is always on the look-out to learn what he can. While waiting in a newspaper office for a package, he will notice how a mailing machine is made to do its work, and if he is sent to the florist's he will be able to tell you many things which he noticed there. In these and a hundred other ways, such lads are educating themselves.

The same rule of "little by little" is equally true in the accumulation of a fortune. Rome was built of single bricks, piled up one by one. The little coral insect seems too small and weak to accomplish much, and yet it labours on, and at last rears those great reefs, which serve as breakwaters against the mighty ocean.

One of the most interesting books issued in a long while, is the memoir of the two brothers, Robert and William Chambers, the great Scotch publishers. Every boy who is ambitious to make his mark in life ought to read it. No one who saw them in the day of their prosperity, would have dreamed how very humble was their beginning. I will not spoil the story for you, by giving any of the details.

The most important lesson to be learned from the text is the encouragement it furnishes us in our efforts to grow in grace and in Divine knowledge. No one can become good in a day, or a week; or even a month, or a year. Our Saviour teaches us that we are to look first for the blade, then the ear, and, last of all, for the full corn in the ear (St Mark iv. 28).

Not only are all *good* things secured to us, "little by little," but people accomplish their *ruin* in the same way. It is by small concessions to evil, and slight indulgences, that the final destruction of health, of character, and of life, is accomplished. The child who steals lumps of sugar, and apples, will go on to steal bigger things.

In one of Gulliver's tales of his fabulous travels he tells us of being pinned down to the earth by pigmies no bigger than his thumb. But they came upon him by thousands. They bound him finger by finger with tiny ropes no thicker than a hair. Each one he could have broken in an instant, but altogether they bound him as fast as if he had been tied with cables, and fettered with iron.

In a Carolina forest of a thousand acres you can scarcely find a tree that is not dead and crumbling to decay. No fire has swept over it, no lightning scathed those naked, bleaching pines. This ruin was wrought by a little insect's larvæ, no larger than a grain of rice. What a hundred axe-men could not accomplish by years of hard labour, this seemingly insignificant insect sent its feeble offspring to perform. One alone could have little power it is true. But millions were marshalled, and all the skill of man could not stay their course.

Such is the power of little sins. By performing the same act over, for even

two or three times in succession, the habit is formed, from the dominion of which it is hard to deliver oneself again.—*Rev. J. N. Norton.*

The Handful of Corn on the Top of the Mountains

"There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains."—Ps. lxxii. 16.

This is a Psalm about Jesus and His Kingdom. It is full of the splendour of His reign. We see Him sitting on the throne of His glory, whilst the kings fall down before Him, and lay their crowns at His feet. The long train of camels and asses comes bringing the gold of Sheba, and gifts from the isles. His enemies are led in triumph, and are made to lick the dust. But suddenly, amidst all this glittering pomp and splendour, the Psalmist takes us away to the bleak mountain-top. Here, where the wild winds sweep, we stand on the barren rocks that crop up from the heather, amidst loneliness that is only illustrated by the hoarse croaking of the raven, or as the eagle sails on his great wings far over head. And standing there, he does not show us the great extent of the Lord's Kingdom reaching from the river to the ends of the earth; he does not tell us of the gold in the rock, or of gems that will adorn the Saviour's crown. He shows only "*a handful of corn*"! It seems a very little thing to talk about, after all this majesty. And yet we shall find in it some wonderful things that it will do us good to remember.

I. Let us think of where the corn comes from.—It does not come like anything else in the world. In the woods you may sometimes find a tree growing with a little round black fruit, hard and sour. It does not seem to be worth much by the side of the luscious plum from the garden. But that sloe, as it is called, is the plum in its wild state. The gardener takes it, and trains it, and cultivates it until it comes to be a larger and finer tree. So it is with the crab-tree and its little bitter fruit—that is the wild apple. And so with the strawberry, and all the fruits and plants in our gardens. They were found in a wild state, and they had to be cared for and cultivated before they were worth anything. But nobody ever found corn growing wild. Unlike everything else, corn is the special and peculiar gift of God, which He put into man's hand just as it is. You remember that when Adam was in the Garden of Eden, he had to dress it and to keep it. All grew of itself and he had only to prune it and to keep it in order. But when he was driven forth from the garden, he had to "eat bread." And that was to grow, not of itself, but only by hard work. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread"—this was the new commandment. So God gave to him "the handful of corn," unlike everything else.

Now, dear children, if you will think for a moment, you will see how much this is like Jesus. He came a Man amongst men, and yet He is separate from us, and unlike us all. He is the special Gift of God to a perishing world. All the good and wise men amongst us have been evil. They were born in sin, and their hearts, like ours, were prone to be wild and evil. The Husbandman has had to watch over them and care for them, and He has brought them into gentleness and goodness and wisdom. But Jesus was born without sin. We could never have found such a one as Jesus amongst us. He is the Gift of God—the Bread of Life sent down from Heaven. And it is pleasant to remember that Jesus was given to us in Bethlehem—that means, you know, "the House of Bread." Away on the Judean hills then, in the House of Bread, God gave to us "the handful of corn."

II. Then think of another wonderful thing about the corn—*it will grow all over the world.* You learn of different things that grow in different

countries—sugar in the West Indies, and tea in China, and spices and many kinds of trees in other places. I have heard that once, when a certain ship came into an Australian harbour, all the people flocked down to it, and everybody was eager to buy, even at a fabulous price, the treasure that it carried on board. What do you think the treasure was? Why, nothing but a little daisy—a common daisy. And to these people far away, it seemed like a little bit of home come to them when they saw a daisy again. Though it was common enough here there it did not grow. But corn grows all over the world. No emigrant ever goes to a place where he cannot sow corn and reap a harvest. In the tropics, where the sun beats down upon them with a sweltering heat, corn will grow. Up in the arctic regions, where the people wrap themselves in skins of wild beasts, and have little else but whales and seals, they can grow corn. Wherever man can live, corn can grow. And is not that like our Blessed Jesus? He says to us, "*Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*" No home but may have Him in it; no heart but Jesus will dwell there; no land under Heaven but there men may find the Bread of Life. In wild woods, amongst eternal snows, in the heat of the desert, out on the seas, in the islands, on the lonely top of the mountains—everywhere men may find Jesus. He is "the Bread of Life" of which all the world may eat.

III. And let us think again of *what the corn is worth.* A very little thing to talk about, this—"a handful of corn!"—to leave off singing about gold and kings and costly presents, to speak about a little thing like this! It seems very strange at first. But, you know, corn is worth more than gold and all this splendour. Everybody wants bread. The queen cannot do without it, and the poor beggar must have his crust. Everybody wants it. The Book says, "milk" for "babes," and "strong meat" for men; but little folks and old men both need bread. It doesn't matter how rich, or wise, or strong men are, they must have bread just as much as the poor and weak. There is a scene in the Bible that you can find, showing that once there was a great scarcity of bread in a country. And the people got out all they had, their golden cups and plates, and all their precious treasure, and they flung it down before the king, and cried, "Take this; but give us bread, or we die." Again the cry was for bread. Then they drove up their cattle and sheep and horses and asses, and said, "Take these; but give us bread, that we may live and not die!" Yet again they needed corn, and they came, saying, "Take us and our lands; we will be slaves; only give us corn for us and our little ones!" Ah, dear children, "a handful of corn" was more then than all the mountains. It was more than all the gold and all the kingdoms. And this, too, is like Jesus. *We all need Him.* Children and old folk, the weak and the strong, the rich and the poor—none can do without Jesus. And we need Him more than everything. The king in his palace needs Him more than all that he has. There are times when his crown can't help him, and all his wise men are of no avail, and all his wealth and splendour can do nothing for him; but if he has found Jesus, he has more than all the world So we need not wonder that the Psalmist sang of a "handful of corn."

IV. And there is another reason why the Psalmist chooses it to sing about—*because it has life in it.* Here is the handful of little hard, withered seeds—not much to look at. One comes by, and he wonders what that man can be looking at them for. "Don't waste your time over them," he says, "there is gold in this mountain; you had much better dig for that!" And another comes by, "you'll never make much out of that, 'a handful of corn,' up in this bleak place; there are diamonds to be had here—much better look for them." But the man quietly sows his handful of seed, and each seed sends up many stalks, and each stalk has the "full ear," so that his handful of corn

has come to a nice little harvest. He brings it home and thrashes it, and next year he sows it again. This time he sows quite a little field of corn; and again there are the many stalks and again the full ears, and now he has a stack of corn. And when it is thrashed he needs a barn to keep it in. Now he begins to enclose new fields, and to plough up new places. Again he sows it, and again it grows. Now he stands on the top of the mountain to look at it waving in the wind, or still, like fields of ruddy gold in the summer sun. And this year there are many stacks, and the many barns are full. Next year the fields reach down over the mountain side and across the valley. And the man who has dug for gold comes to change his gold for bread, and the man who has found a diamond sells his diamond to buy bread. And gold and diamonds belong to him who sowed the "handful of corn."

And so Jesus is like the handful of corn upon the top of the mountains: the prophet tells us that we "esteemed Him not," and "hid as it were our faces from Him"; there was no appearance of greatness in Him, or of power. *But in Him is life.* He comes into our hearts, and we are made like Him, and from us others catch a grain of the good seed, and the life spreads from heart to heart and from soul to soul, until "the whole earth shall be filled with His glory."

V. If you look at the third verse of the Psalm you will find this—"*The mountains shall bring peace to the people.*" The mountains were commonly the haunts of wild robber bands; and in the forests that grew on the mountains there were the wild beasts fierce and bloody. And now these very mountains were to "bring peace." And in doing this, nothing could be so helpful as that same "handful of corn on the top of the mountains." *Corn is a great peace-bringer.* Wherever men have no corn, they are savages, living from hand to mouth, like the wild beasts about them. But if they would have corn, they are compelled to work regularly. They must manage and arrange. Then, too, they begin "to have dominion over the earth." The woods that hid the robbers are cleared for the corn; and the wild beasts are driven from their homes. The marshes are drained, and the desert begins to "bud and blossom as the rose." Well might the Psalmist sing of "a handful of corn"; for in this, too, it is like our Blessed Jesus. Where He comes, the cruel robber bands are broken up, and the wild beasts are turned into gentleness, so that a little child can lead them. Mr Wilson tells us that once in Fiji the men were rowing their canoe to one island which was very difficult to reach, when they might easily have got to another. He asked, "Why don't you row to that one?" The men shook their heads. Jesus was not known in that island, but He was in the other, and that made a great difference. "If we go to this island," said the men, "the people will cook *for* us. But if we go to the other they will cook *us*." Where Jesus comes there come gentleness and blessedness and peace. The savage are made loving, the fierce and cruel are filled with His own spirit, and the rough "mountains" themselves "bring peace."

VI. And yet though there is all this that is wonderful about the corn, let us remember that it is of no good *except it be sown.* A handful of corn is indeed a poor thing without that. They have found some mummies in Egypt thousands of years old, and in their hands they have found some tiny grains of corn. If they had been sown, by this time they would have grown into enough to feed the world. But after thousands of years there they are, just the same as when they were first put there. And so, dear children, the glory of Jesus grows only when we have Jesus in our heart. It is not enough to know all about the corn and to have it in our hand, or to read about Jesus and only to think of Him. We must get His life in our heart. It must be

Christ in us. Then we shall begin to be filled with His love, and shall be made like unto Him.

VII. And remember another thing, too, that corn *only grows where the ground is made ready.* The grass of the meadow springs up and sows its own seed for the cattle, that sow not nor reap nor gather into barns. But corn will only grow where the hard ground is broken up for it; the plough must send its keen knife from end to end of the field. Then the sower can come with his precious seed. And so we need to be made ready for Jesus. The Holy Spirit comes to us, and makes us feel our sins, and makes our hearts ready. Do not wait trying to make yourselves ready, the Holy Spirit is come to do that for us. Ask Him to make your hearts ready for Jesus to come and live in them and He will do it.

There is yet one other thing about corn that we cannot forget. Before *the corn does us any good it dies.* "That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die," so says Paul; and Jesus Himself tells us, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." The seed in the ground dies that it may give us its fruit. And so with the corn that becomes our bread. It is taken and beaten and ground, and the life goes out of it that it may make us strong. Ah! dear children, think how much this is like Jesus. He lays down His life for us. He dies that we may live. He is beaten and scourged and broken that we may have strength and everlasting life.

Dear children, let us receive Him into our hearts. Let us live to serve and please Him. And let us pray as David prayed—"*Blessed be His glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with His glory.—Amen and Amen!*"—*Rev. Mark Guy Pearse.*

A Boy of Flanders

"*Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.*"—*St Luke xii.* 4.

One day Jesus was urging people not to give up being good whatever came, and He told them not to be frightened of lightnings and storms, and shipwrecks, nor of savage beasts like bears and lions, nor of savage men, nor of anything indeed which could only destroy the body, and, after it had done that, had nothing else that it could do.

The thing to fear was what could damage purity and truth and kindness, and thus destroy both soul and body. Dread that; and fight against that.

And all this was not because Jesus had no sympathy with fear of bodily harm; for He had Himself been made miserable and wretched enough by men who could destroy His body, and threatened to do it, because they wanted to frighten Him from His duty to God. And at length they did kill Him, and got Him out of the way. But Jesus knew that the man who kills our body only drives us out of sight of the fields and homes beneath the blue sky; the man who tempts us to sin and do wickedness kills the soul and drags us out of the Paradise of God, and that is the dreadful thing.

I want to tell you a story of a Flemish boy who was just the man Jesus would like to make us all. He was a small boy, twelve years old at the time, and the child of a widow who needed the little man's earnings to help to keep her home together.

He tended cows along the broad green roadsides which all the summer long were overrun with sweet herbage and flowers; watching them lest they should stray away into the neighbouring corn-fields and crop the growing corn, or munch the springing greens in the gardens; for the country he lived in was

without walls, or hedges, or fences, to divide field from road. It consisted of flat breadths of quite open pasture and ploughed lands. So the cattle must stand all the summer through in their dark stalls, or be kept by this little tender boy from eating up the coming harvest.

His home was such as belongs to the very poor of his country, a destitute-looking place, shut up from morning to night, for both mother and child took their simple meals with them, and were out all day at their work.

But, though they saw little of each other, there was a close tie between them. Their joy was in the simple love of one another, and in the love of truth and right; a love which in the boy had grown with his growth, and become daily more and more himself. What was untrue or wrong or unkind was impossible to him. He loved goodness with all his heart, and it seemed as if in the person of his mother goodness loved him with the same strong love; and the boy smiled and sang and whistled the more sweetly and merrily for it.

One day he was tending his cows among the deep rank grass, where the road ran close by a clump of trees which was an orchard. The orchard, as orchards ought to be, was fenced round with high, close palings. Not that, if there had been no palings, the little cow-herd would have allowed his charge to stray into it, or have been tempted to wander there himself.

How could a boy steal somebody's plums, when the mere thought of such a thing, if it had ever occurred to him, would have cut his very heart like a knife, and turned his whole life and soul into an aching misery? To take the fruit growing there had never occurred to him, any more than to take the tiny drops of honey from the mouths of the bees that droned and buzzed among the sunny flowers. But to-day, just as he was passing the orchard, two frolicsome young gentlemen were passing too.

"Oh! here is the very man," exclaimed one of them as they caught sight of the boy, breast deep in the long grass and bushes. "Look here, my little man. Go through there," he continued, at the same time pointing to a small hole in the orchard fence, through which the boy's small body might just manage to squeeze itself, "and get us some plums. Now, look quick—there's nobody about, and you shall have some for yourself."

But the cow-herd did not move. He smiled a little distressed smile, and slowly shaking his head said, "No, sir."

"You say 'No,' do you? You go, or I'll——" and looking round his eyes rested on a pool of stagnant water close by—"or I'll give you a ducking."

The simple-hearted little fellow, as he looked from the threatening speaker to his big companion, turned a little pale, and looked timid and sick, but he only said, in a still more subdued tone:

"No, sir; I cannot, sir."

He looked as though he hoped they were in fun, but feared they were in earnest.

The young gentleman felt an implied preachment in this little fellow's daring refusal, and he would not stand it. He was angry, and seizing the boy sharply by his shoulder he hurried him to the hole in the fence and said:

"Now go through there and bring us some plums, or I'll take you to that pond there and I'll duck you; I will, there's no mistake."

The child turned up his pale, sad, little face, and stood speechless with fear. But he did not offer to go through the hole.

The young gentleman took the silence as his answer, and hurried him to the pond and angrily ducked him, and then asked again:

"Now will you?"

When breath came back sufficiently he gasped:

"Oh, sir, I can't."

Before he could draw another breath, before indeed the sentence was well finished, he was thrust under the water again. His tormentor's anger was thoroughly roused:

"I'll show you," said he, "that you can and shall!" For it seemed to him there was nothing but obstinacy in the boy, and perhaps there was as much rough fun in the punishment as there was anger.

As long as the child could speak, he declined to do the wrong, and the young gentlemen were too proud to give up the contest defeated. Unfortunately for them, the boy was delicate, and long before they had any idea of danger, they brought him out of the water too far gone to hear them speak. He was beyond the reach alike of their torture and their questions. The heart had stopped; the little head fell back—he was dead.

Nobody, scarcely even his own mother when she came to know what had happened, suffered such agonies as these two youths endured when they saw the pallor of the face, and feared what they had done. They bent over the child, tenderly breathed into his nostrils, and eagerly used every expedient they knew to bring back consciousness; they wept; they prayed; they would have given, oh, the world, to have seen those closed little eyelids just lift again. But it was too late.

It was an awful moment for them, and they were full of repentance and shame and sorrow.

And here, for their sake and our own too, let us be glad that this is God's world in which we all live, and that He does not judge any of us by what we have actually done, but only by what we intended to do.

Still, what they intended to do was bad enough, though they only intended to frighten a child into stealing; and let me say, by the way, we are never safe from the mistakes and cruelties of which the world is full, unless we follow the God of love. Kindness and self-denial *never* err.

But it is the boy I want you to see, and his simple, single-hearted love of right. They wanted to drag the little soul out of its Paradise, and they could not do it. They destroyed the body, but, after that, they had nothing more that they could do.

Better is it to die of a broken heart, or be drowned, than to do wrong. A spirit which feels that, has in it the Heaven of Christ, the peace of God. You may never have to choose between right-doing with bodily suffering, and wrongdoing with comfort and ease.

But it is very likely, indeed, it is certain, that you will have to say which you will choose: on the one hand, the smiles of your companions and wrong-doing, or, on the other, their laughter and scorn and doing right. And when that happens, I beg you, don't be dragged from Paradise. Do right, and remember the little cow-herd boy whose body lay pale in death on the green grass of that Flanders ditch, and whose little spirit wore a bright crown with God. Or, better still, remember Jesus and His loving, earnest plea, "Fear not them which kill the body, but after that have nothing more than they can do; fear him who can destroy both body and soul."—*Rev. B. Waugh.*

The King's Demand

"*My son, give Me thine heart.*"—*Prov. xxiii. 26.*

What is the reason for this demand? When anyone makes a demand upon you for a thing, especially if it is something valuable, you very naturally ask, "Why is this demand made? what is the reason of it?" And when the Lord Jesus demands the best you have to give, you are quite

entitled to ask a reason for it, and you may be sure He has a good reason to give. If I were to lay my hand upon the best thing you have, the thing which you prize most, and were to say, "I want this," I am almost certain you would answer me in one or other of two ways. You would either say No, or you would say Why? And when Jesus makes His demand for the heart, that is just what many people, both old and young, say to Him. Many say No right out, and many ask the reason why—"Why should we?" Now, there are three reasons that might be given for complying with Christ's demand:

I. It is a right thing to give the heart to Christ—it is your duty. Christ has a right to what He asks. If you have made a thing, you think you have a right to it. If you have bought a thing, you think you have a right to it. In the case of either, you say, "It is mine by right." If it were a bicycle, for instance, which you had contrived by your own wisdom, made with your own hands, or bought with your own money, you might indeed give it to another, or lend it to another; but if others took it from you, and were always using it, and you could never get the use of it, even when most you wished it or needed it, would you not have the feeling that a wrong had been done to you? You might say, "I have made it or bought it for myself, and yet it is all one as if I had nothing to do with it."

I dare say you have seen the picture of a sparrow in a swallow's nest. The swallow, after having spent the cold winter in a warmer country, came with other swallow-friends to spend the summer in this land. It began to build its nest in the corner of a window, taking great pains with it, working late and early to prepare a comfortable home for its little ones, and when it was all complete, I suppose it would be glad its labour was over, and would admire its handiwork and think (after its own fashion) what a comfortable house it had made ready, first for the eggs, and then for the little birds that would come out of them. But one day when it had gone out to get some food, or to have a little pleasant exercise, darting through the air, or flying round the steeple with some of its friends, a sparrow that had been looking out for a house, saw this one, peeped in, found it all nice and cosy, and said to itself, "Well, I need not trouble to build a nest for myself, when this one is ready made, and is as snug as a nest can be"; so without more ado it took possession, and when the swallow came back, it found its house occupied by a stranger, who set it at defiance, and, like a thief and a robber, stole and kept what belonged to another. Now when the swallow came back and said, "Give me my house," if the sparrow had asked the reason why, the answer might have been, "Because I have a right to it." You would say at once, "Surely the swallow should get it, because it is right." Would you not?

Or let me suppose that instead of a swallow, it was yourself who had built a house, that you had papered and painted and furnished it, laying out the little garden round it, planting it with the flowers you like best. But when you come home one day, a stranger opens the door, looks at you as if you were an intruder, asks what you want, tells you to be gone, shuts the door in your face, turns the key in the lock, draws the bar and fastens the chain, as much as to say, "You shall never get in here!" What would you think? What would you say? "Give me my house." Why? "Because no one has a right to it but myself."

And it is just so with the Lord Jesus. He made your heart for Himself. He wants it for Himself. He wants to occupy it, to make it His dwelling-place. He says, "Behold I stand at the door and knock. Let Me in. Give Me thine heart." And if you ask a reason, He might say, just like

yourself, "Because I have a right to it. I made it, made it for Myself, and it is right that I should have it."

I have heard of a widowed mother, whose husband had taken ill and died, just as they were starting in life, leaving her with a little boy, and with nothing to live upon. She had no friends to help her, and she would not apply for help to strangers. She was a good needlewoman, and she worked early and late, far more for her boy than for herself. She half-starved herself to give him a comfortable meal. She made her old dress and shawl and bonnet serve for summer and winter, one season after another, that he might get something warm for winter and light for summer. She saved every penny she could, to be able to give her son a good education, often saying, "That is all the fortune I can hope to leave him." And by the time she had paid the rent, and the taxes, and the school fees, and all the little accounts that had to be met, you will hardly wonder when I tell you, that she had worked her fingers to the bone, and what with long hours and fine work and sewing by gaslight, she had almost sewed herself blind. And when that boy grew up, he became selfish, wilful, disobedient, unkind. He could not get things good enough for himself. He took up with bad companions. He learned to drink and to smoke. He began to stay out at night, and never would tell where he had been, thinking himself ill-used if he was questioned. One winter morning he did not come in till three o'clock. The light was not out, for his mother never went to bed till she saw him safely home. Gently she said, "What are things to come to, Charlie?" and as he angrily asked, "What do you want?" if she had spoken what she thought, she would have answered: "Your heart!" She wanted his confidence, his love, his devotion.

And if he had asked, Why?—if anybody had asked the reason for such a demand being made, is there a boy or girl who reads this, who could not have given an answer? "Reason!" you would say, "there is reason enough. Do you know the history of that mother and her boy—what she has been to him, what she has done for him, what she has suffered for him?—everything short of dying, and that may come too. Has she not a right to what she asks? is it not his duty to give it? is he not bound by every consideration? would it not be a shame and disgrace if he were to refuse? Had she not earned the right to her boy's heart? did she not deserve it? would not everybody cry 'shame' on him if he said No?"

I am sorry to say that such things happen. There are mothers who say to their sons, "Give me thine heart." They want nothing else. Their one wish is, "thine heart." And they do not get it. The greatest right under Heaven, next to the right which God claims, is withheld, and so the greatest wrong, next to wrong done to God, is committed.

And this is the kind of treatment which the Lord Jesus gets. I could give you a penny book—one of the four Gospels—which contains the most wonderful story of love and devotion that ever was written. All the tales of sorrow and suffering, and death which the world has ever heard, are not once to be compared with it. In hurrying through Belgium, I made a run through the picture-gallery and the cathedral at Antwerp, where some of the greatest pictures in the world are to be seen. People go to see them from all parts of the world. I do not know that their value, in money, could be estimated. "And what are the pictures?" you ask. They are pictures of the greatest events that have ever taken place since the world was created—of the greatest love the world ever saw, the greatest sorrow, the greatest suffering—the love, the sorrow, the suffering of Jesus for sinners. Jesus in the manger. Jesus in the garden, Jesus bearing

the Cross, Jesus hanging on the accursed tree, Jesus pierced by the soldier's spear, Jesus taken down from the Cross to be laid in the grave. But we need no pictures to see all this. We are better without them. The simple Gospel story to which I have referred is enough. You have but to read it and be taught by the Holy Spirit what it means, in order to see the claim which Jesus has on human hearts, the right He has to say "Give Me thine heart," and to have the right acknowledged.

Is there a boy or girl—is there a young man or young women who would call the claim in question, who would ask, "What right has He to my heart? How am I bound to surrender myself to Him?" I point to the humble birth of the King of Glory, to His poverty and homelessness, to the whole treatment He received at the hands of men, to the agony in Gethsemane, to the betrayal, to the crucifixion with all its terrible accompaniments, and I say, "Let these answer the question." You say, "Is this true? is it all true? For if it is, surely it is right that Jesus should have all He asks." And when you hear the loving demand, now from the Cross, and now from the Throne—now from a dying Saviour, and now from the ascended and glorified King, "Give Me thine heart," will you not give Him your heart's trust and love and devotion?

"I gave Myself for thee,
Give thou thyself to Me."

II. It is a safe thing to give the heart to Christ—it is your interest. It is important to have our "valuables," as we call them, in a place of safety. Many people who live in town, go to the country for the summer. You see windows covered with brown paper, and the door "brasses" uncleaned, and the grass growing on the street, telling that the houses are unoccupied. And what if thieves should break into the unoccupied house? What of the silver-plate and other precious things which are there in winter? They are all out of the reach of danger, in the great "safes" of the bank. The banker, as it were, says, "Send them to me, and they will be safe in my keeping."

When I was in Holland lately, notices were hung up in the bedrooms of the hotels, in three languages—Dutch, German, and French—saying that all "valuables" were to be handed over to the keeping of the owner of the hotel. He, as it were, said to each of us, "Commit them to me, and so they will be safe."

Now, the most precious thing you have, is your heart. I do not mean the heart which you feel beating in your breast, though that is so important that your life depends on it. I mean the heart as the seat of the affections—that which trusts and loves and desires and enjoys. The heart is, to each of us, what the mainspring is to the watch; everything depends on it. If the heart is right, all is right; if the heart is wrong, all is wrong. Hence Jesus says of it, "Out of it are the issues of life." What an important thing, then, a heart must be!

And each of you has a heart; not only the older people, but the youngest boy and girl. If I were to put my hand on your breast, I would say, "I know there is a heart here, for I feel it beating." And so I have but to watch you for five minutes, to know that you have this other "heart" of which I am speaking.

Now it is a very serious matter for every little child to have such an important thing in his possession. I would not give my watch, or my purse, or even my knife, into the keeping of any child I might meet. I would

be afraid of his losing it, or having it taken from him, or getting it injured. And if you had such a thing of your own, I would say, "You must have someone to keep it for you." And everything would depend on having the right sort of person to keep it—a trustworthy person, one in whose hands it would be safe. It is not everyone that would be fit to be trusted with it. I have heard of a girl being sent to a shop with half-a-crown to buy tea and sugar and such-like things, when a man came up to her and said, "My girl, it is not safe for you to have so much money in your hand. Give it to me, and I shall keep it for you." And she gave it to him, and he went off, and she never saw it more.

And so there are those who want to get your heart. The world wants to get it—Satan wants to get it, others want to get it. But Jesus says "No; no one must get it but Myself. No one has a right to it but Myself. No one can keep it safe but Myself. Give Me your heart. You cannot keep your own heart. Your mother cannot keep it for you. It is safe nowhere but in My keeping. Give it to Me."

A party of us left the Victoria Station in London one night, a little while ago, "booked" our luggage for Amsterdam, and handed it over to the keeping of the Railway Company. We got on board the steamer at Queenborough, we sailed across the sea to Flushing, travelled to Utrecht, went away in another direction altogether and spent the day, and got into Amsterdam late at night. When we arrived, our luggage was nowhere to be seen, but the stationmaster said, "You may be sure it is all right, and will be at your hotel before you are up in the morning." And accordingly, early in the morning, a loud knock awoke me, I jumped up, opened the door, and there was a Dutch porter, with my portmanteau in his hand, all safe. If it had been in my own keeping, no saying what might have become of it. It was in better hands, and came all right.

So with your heart. "Give it to Me," says Jesus, "and all the way through, and at the end, you will find it safe." Many have tried other ways of it, but these have always turned out ill. Sometimes there was a lost heart. Sometimes there was a broken heart. The heart is safe in the keeping of Jesus, and nowhere else.

III. It is a happy thing to give the heart to Christ—it is your blessed privilege. It is strange the notion some people have about the religion of Jesus. You ask a boy or a young man if he would not like to be a Christian, and a cloud comes over his brow at once. You ask a girl if she will not give her heart to Christ, and she looks almost as if you were threatening to do her some harm. When I was walking along the street one day, a nun passed by, and I heard a boy say, "I would not like to live with these gowned people!" And that is just what some people think about deciding for Christ. They say it is like leaving the sunshine to go into a gloomy prison—it is like bidding farewell to all that is bright and joyous, and exchanging it for mourning—it is like giving up the liberty that is life, and becoming a slave.

I say No. The Bible says No. Everyone who has tried it says No. There never was a greater mistake. Those who have given their hearts to Christ are of all people the happiest. It must be so. It is a happy thing to do what is right. You cannot do what is right, however hard and trying it may be, without a feeling of gladness filling your heart. Conscience approves. God approves. All the right-hearted approve. And if it is right to give the heart to Christ, you cannot do so without being happy in the very act. Otherwise, it is like keeping something that belongs to another. It is a burden every time you think of it. What a relief it is to have it out of your hands.

It is a happy thing to have a sense of safety, to feel that you are safe, and that what you value is safe. I can fancy one of you boys, when you are a little older, becoming a bank-messenger. You are travelling from London with a box in your possession, containing £10,000. At the first stopping-place, two suspicious-looking men come into the carriage. They are constantly eyeing your box. They begin to whisper to each other, and you hear the words "bank," "money," "box." You do not know what to do. You think of all the stories you have ever heard, about railway robberies. The perspiration breaks out upon you. You can almost hear your heart beating. Your breath seems as if it would leave you. Every tunnel the train plunges into, seems as if it would be the scene of the dreaded outrage. You wonder whether you should pull the cord for the guard to stop the train, or what—every minute seems like an hour. But when the next stoppage comes, three well-known friends appear on the platform and come into your carriage, and all your fears vanish in a moment. Oh how glad the sense of safety makes you!

Is it so? Then what of the knowledge that the most precious treasure you have, is safe for eternity? Your heart safe! Your soul safe! All safe! When you travel, when you are sick, when any outward danger threatens—safe! Would that make you sad? Could it? Would you not go to your work, and enter into your sports, and enjoy the society of your friends, with all the more gladness, when you felt that all was safe?

And then what happiness there is, in looking forward to a life of usefulness here, and to life eternal in glory—the best that can be here being only a faint shadow of what shall be yonder! Who can think of it without being happy? I have heard of an old cobbler sitting at the door of his stall, working hard for his bread, and singing as cheerily as the bird in the cage that hung over his head. A young man who was hurrying past heard him, and pityingly said, "Poor man!" "Not poor," said the cobbler; "I'm a King's son!" It does not need money to make one happy, nor earthly honours, nor even health, nor even friends. There have been those who have had none of all these, and yet they were the happiest people in the world, because they were Christ's.

IV. The Manner of the Demand.—Sometimes you have demands made upon you roughly, threateningly; and even where the thing itself is right, the manner of the demand turns your heart against it. But it is far otherwise with Jesus. He puts it so gently and kindly, that you would think it could hardly fail to win. He says, "My son." It is just as if your father or your mother were to come to you, to make some request, and putting the hand upon your shoulder, were tenderly to say, "My son—will you?" Who could have the heart to say No? Thus it was, that the wise king made his request, long ago. Thus it is, that the Heavenly King sends His message to you now. What shall your answer be?

"Take my heart, it is Thine own,
It shall be Thy royal throne."

—*Rev. J. H. Wilson, D.D.*

Evil Words

"*Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth.*"—*Eph. iv.* 29.

When the slave Æsop, who wrote those fables which we all know so well, was ordered by Xanthus, his master, to provide the best things he could find in the market for a large dinner-party, he bought up a lot of tongues, which he ordered the cook to serve with different sauces. The guests came;

dinner was served; and to everyone's wonder there was nothing to eat but tongue. The first dish was tongue, and the second tongue, and the third tongue, and so on until Xanthus became quite enraged, and sending for Æsop asked what he meant? Was he not told to get the best of everything in the market? Æsop made answer, very calmly, "And what is there better than tongue?" Then he went on to show that we should be like the beasts of the field if it were not for our tongues, by which we are able to teach one another in all useful things. His master laughed at his reply, and told him to get the worst things in the market for to-morrow's dinner. "The same company will be here," he said; "but we should like a change." So next day they all came to dinner again. The covers were lifted, and, behold, there was nothing but tongue again. "What do you mean by it?" cried Xanthus. Then Æsop replied that the tongue was also the worst thing in the world. The tongue told lies; the tongue made people angry; the tongue was the source of all kinds of evil. So you see, the tongue may be the best or the worst thing in the world according as you use it. It may utter cursing or blessing. Its words may be good or evil. All depends upon your use or abuse of its powers.

Let me now tell you of some evil words which you should shun. Our text exhorts us to "let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth." Now "corrupt speech" includes:

I. All Rude Words.—Boys and girls are often rude *to one another.* They pelt their playmates with vulgar nicknames. They are not considerate or thoughtful of each other's feelings. They are often rude *to their parents.* I have heard children speak quite saucily to their father and mother. They answered back, they contradicted, they grumbled, and their manner seemed to say, "Who cares for you?" Sometimes children are rude *to their teachers.* A boy is asked to do something and says: "I shan't"; or a girl so far forgets herself as to be impudent in her answers. Very often children are rude *to the poor and infirm.* Nothing is more disheartening than to see a troop of boys and girls following after some poor half-witted man, or some ill-clad and perhaps ill-tempered woman. It is so very mean and cruel and low. If you must make game of somebody, shout after some strong man who is able to run and catch you and give you your deserts; don't mock the weak and helpless. You should pity them. Many children, again, are rude *to servants.* They seem to fancy that they may say what they like to the servant; her feelings need not be considered; and if she says anything in reply, the spoilt child will run off to tell, with make-believe crying: "Mary's been scolding me." Now I want you to learn the lesson that rude words ought never to be spoken; that you have no more right to be rude to a little boy in the street than you have to be rude to the King of England; that you ought to be polite and considerate always. In the days when negroes were held as slaves, one of them bowed to Sir W. Johnson in the street. He lifted his hat in response, and was reminded by a friend that it was not fashionable to do so. "Perhaps not," said Sir William; "but I would not be outdone in good manners by a negro." That was the spirit of a true gentleman; he will be gentlemanly to all, he will be rude to none, he will ever say and do to others what he would have them say and do to him. Then "let no" *rude words* "proceed out of your mouth."

II. All False Words.—Young children always speak the truth. It is natural to do so. But as the little ones grow older they are tempted to speak falsely. Sometimes they have done wrong and are afraid of punishment, and they tell a lie to escape it. Sometimes they are guilty of falsehood to screen someone else. And lively boys and girls are sometimes tempted to

exaggerate what they have seen until their story becomes quite untrue. Now lying is not only wicked, but dangerous. One lie leads to another, and there is no sin which drags the sinner down so fast. Besides which lies are sure to be found out; as the proverb says: "A liar is sooner caught than a cripple." The only right and safe thing to do is to speak the simple truth, always and to everyone. There is a Persian story of a mother who gave her son forty dinars, or pieces of silver, when he went from home, and made him promise never to tell a lie. He had a long journey to make, and on his way was attacked by robbers. Finding no money in his pocket one of the thieves asked him how much he had. The lad replied: "I have forty dinars sewn up in my garment." The robber laughed and thought it a good joke. Then another asked him, and received the same reply. But they both thought that he would not have told them if it were true. So they took him to their chief, who put the same question. The boy answered: "I have told two of your people already that I have forty dinars sewn up in my clothes." The chief ordered the clothes to be ripped open and found the money. "Why did you tell me?" he asked, in great astonishment. And the lad replied, "Because I would not be false to my mother, whom I promised never to tell a lie." Then the robber chieftain was stricken with shame, and said to the brave boy: "Give me your hand that I may swear repentance on it," and not only set the lad free, but gave up his own wicked life from that day. How great is the power of truth!

III. All Angry Words.—Let me tell you a fable. A great lump of iron once had to be melted and put into a different shape. And all the tools had a meeting to consider how to do it. Each was positive that it could do the work. The axe jumped up and shouted boastfully: "I'll master it." So he hacked away with all his might; his blows were heavy enough to fell a great tree; but every stroke only made his own edge more dull; and at last he gave up in despair. Then the saw exclaimed: "Leave it to me," and set its sharp teeth to work, backward and forward, quite fiercely. But in a little while all its teeth were broken, and the iron was scarcely scratched. So the saw gave up, and the hammer laughed and said: "I knew you were no good—let me have a try." Down he came with a terrible bang—but off flew his head, and there was not even a dint in the solid mass. Then a little flame said very gently: "Shall I try?" All the tools laughed. "What can you do?" they scornfully asked. But the flame curled around the great mass, and wrapped it in a warm glow, and gently caressed it with subduing touch, and gradually the hard iron melted, and became obedient to the flame, and flowed into the appointed moulds. So it is with hard words and gentle ones. You can do no good by hard words. When two people quarrel the angrier and fiercer one is the more obstinate the other becomes. Then "let no" angry words "proceed out of your mouth," for they can do no one any good, and they are sure to do *you* harm. They are one kind of that corrupt speech which we are bidden to avoid. Kind, gentle, loving, tender, gracious words are far stronger and more powerful.

There is a story which tells how an old illiterate monk, named Pambos, once went to a teacher and said he wished to learn a Psalm. People thought him half-witted, and used to laugh at his odd ways, but, of course, the teacher was willing to give him a lesson. So he learnt one verse: "I said I will take heed to my ways that I offend not with my tongue." Then he said he had learnt enough for one day and went away. The next day he did not come; nor the day after that; nor did the teacher see him again until six months later, when he met him in the street, "arms crossed, brow bent,

thought immersed." "When are you coming for your second lesson?" he asked. Poor Pambos answered that he did not know. Said he: "I have not learnt the first yet." I am disposed to think his answer a very wise one. It is not easy to guard oneself so as to "offend not with the tongue." We cannot learn the lesson all at once; but if we try hard and seek of God we shall master it by and by. Then take the poet's advice:

"Keep a watch on your words, my darlings,
For words are wonderful things;
They are sweet like the bees' fresh honey,
Like the bee, they have terrible stings.
They can bless like a warm glad sunshine
And brighten a lonely life;
They can cut in the strife of anger
Like an open two-edged knife.

Keep them back if they're cold and cruel,
Under bar and lock and seal;
The wounds they make, my darling,
Are always slow to heal.
May peace guard your lips ever onward;
From this time of your early youth,
May the words that you daily utter
Be the beautiful words of truth."

—*Rev. G. H. James.*

The Sorcerer's Apprentice

At a concert at the Queen's Hall a few weeks ago, the Orchestra played a Scherzo called "L'Apprenti Sorcier," or the Sorcerer's Apprentice. It is a very quaint piece of descriptive music, and is founded on a ballad of Goethe's, the great German poet. This is the story that the music was written to describe. Once upon a time there lived an old sorcerer, who had as his apprentice a young boy. This boy had learnt from his master the way to bewitch and work spells. One day when the sorcerer was out the apprentice thought he would take advantage of his master's absence and have an easy time. One of his duties was to draw water from the river, for there were no water-taps in the houses as there are in ours. Now this apprentice was a very lazy fellow, and he didn't want to be bothered to go down to the river and carry up heavy pails of water, so he thought he would try his hand at bewitching someone else to do his work for him. Just then his eye fell on a broom, so he cast his spell over the broom, and away it went with the pails to the river. This was just what the lazy boy wanted, and so he took his ease and congratulated himself on having thought of such a smart way out of a disagreeable duty. Meanwhile the broom was such a very busy broom fetching and carrying with such real good will, that presently every pail and jug and basin in the house was full of water. And then a very awkward situation arose. The lazy apprentice had forgotten how to break the spell and he could not stop the broom! In desperation he seized the broom and broke it in two, when, to his amazement and dismay, the two halves became two little imps, that kept on fetching water from the river twice as fast as the broom had done! Nothing could stop them, and now the water was running all over the floor and getting deeper and deeper, and still the apprentice could not remember the magic word that would break the spell. However, when things were at their very worst, and the

house was in danger of being swept away, the sorcerer returned, and broke the spell, and the two little imps became a broom once more.

Now this is a very quaint and curious story is it not? But I have told it to you not merely for the sake of the story, but because there is a great truth in it for us all to learn. That truth is just this that the lazy boy always gets into trouble. You know quite well that if instead of doing your lessons you go and play cricket or football or read an interesting story-book, you will get into trouble at school and sooner or later find yourself at the bottom of the class. There will be trouble with your master and trouble with your parents, and all your little world will be miserable and unhappy just because of your laziness. You may be struggling with the *pons asinorum* and the Latin verbs, and may often wish that all your school-books were at the bottom of the sea, and that such things as schools had never been invented, but you will never know what real happiness is until you throw your whole soul into the work you are doing however hard and dry it may seem to you to be. There is a well-known song that I expect some of you know, about the joys of "life on the ocean wave," and I have known many boys who have said to themselves, "I wish I could live a life of freedom and adventure like the heroes and pirates and explorers of old, away from musty books and masters." But if you had an Aladdin's lamp and could obtain your wish, you would quickly find that you would grow peevish and unhappy and discontented. The only life that produces heroes is the life of duty and service for others. And it is the only way by which we can find true and lasting happiness. You remember Nelson's famous message at Trafalgar: "England expects every man to do his duty," and you know how nobly the brave sailors responded on that fateful day. There is a message for you and for all of us from a greater than Nelson—God expects every one of us to do his duty. And what an example we have in Jesus! He worked as a boy at the carpenter's bench, and when He became a man He laboured day and night in doing the will of His Father. He had none of the comforts and luxuries that we have. He was lonely and homeless. "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." He was often tired and weary, yet never once did He shirk or turn aside from the path of duty and obedience. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." When you are tempted to shirk your duty, when your lessons seem hard and dry and uninteresting, think of Him Who for our sakes toiled and laboured and died, and ask Him to help you to persevere, and you will never ask in vain.—*Archibald Reith.*

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

The Collect

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, mercifully look upon our infirmities, and in all our dangers and necessities stretch forth Thy right hand to help and defend us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Collect appointed for to-day is taken from the Sacramentary of Gregory (A.D. 590). It has been slightly enlarged, but its present form is substantially the same as that in which it was originally drawn up. It would perhaps be impossible to frame a prayer in language so concise, so comprehensive, and at the same time more in harmony with the Gospel appointed for the day. It speaks of the infirmities to which fallen man is subject, and furnishes him with a fitting address to Christ, the Great Physician, for help and consolation. In the Gospel we have the account of one afflicted with leprosy, who came to Christ and was healed. This loathsome disease has, from its effects and incurable nature, been aptly used as an illustration of *sin*; thus by a natural transition we are led to contemplate the life-giving power of Him Who "stretched forth His right hand" and said, "I *will*, be thou clean." It was the mere exercise of Christ's will that healed (as the same Gospel relates) the centurion's servant; so that, where the leper in the one case, and the heathen centurion in the other, found an answer to their prayers, we Christians may expect to find a cure for sin, the disease of the soul, if we sincerely ask it.

The Lord Our Helper

"*The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*" —*Heb. xiii. 6.*

If God says anything to us, we may rely upon His words utterly. What has He said? "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Therefore

I. TAKE CARE NOT TO FORSAKE GOD.—We may forsake Him (Heb. iii. 12) by distrusting His word, and living a sinful and selfish life. Then we shall find it hard, bitter, and hopeless. In its dangers and difficulties we shall be alone and helpless.

II. TAKE COUNSEL OF GOD, through His word and prayer, when taking new steps in life, or in perplexity or danger. "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." "Lean not to thine own understanding." Rather say, "Teach me Thy way, O Lord!"

III. REJOICE IN GOD'S FRIENDSHIP AND HELP.—"We may boldly say," etc. True and worthy friendship enriches and gladdens. Cherish the sense of wealth in God's friendship. Take Him at His word, and rejoice in Him.

IV. FEAR NO MAN AND NO TEMPORAL EVIL.—If God is on our side, no man can harm, or evil distress us. Fear of persecution, ridicule, or temporal disadvantage, leads many away from Christ. Peter denied Him at the taunt

of a servant-maid. A laugh or a sneer has robbed many of immortal crowns. Scorn, suffering, or loss cannot rob us of a good conscience, or hide the face of God from us.

As illustrating how sure God's help is in our times of need, give the following anecdote: Fresenius, a minister at Frankfort-on-the-Maine, one day found his mother, who was a widow, concerned about a dollar which she much needed at the time, but knew not how to procure. Not being himself able at that instant to furnish her with one, he said, "I likewise believe that you must have the dollar: I accordingly turn this hour-glass and assure you that if the dollar is really needed, it will positively lie here on the table before the hour-glass is run down. If it does not lie here, God will convince us, after this hour, that it was not as indispensable as we imagine." The hour-glass was scarcely run out one-half when a messenger arrived who had traversed an eight hours' walk, bringing a dollar which someone was owing to Fresenius. This dollar rejoiced mother and son more than if they had received a large capital, they considering it a great memorial coin of the Divine help received.

The Helper of the Tempted

"*He is able to succour them that are tempted.*"—*Heb. ii.* 18.

It is said that a Gallic lord, being led forth to martyrdom in company with some equally faithful though plebeian professors, saw that, out of regard for his rank, the officers put on him no chain, while each of his brethren bore them; upon which he cried, "Let me, I pray you, be clipped of none of my honours; I, too, for love of Jesus, would wear a chain."

So our Lord wanted to fully share our experience, and He was willing that it should even include an experience of our human temptations. We cannot be placed in any circumstances of perplexity or difficulty, but we may realise that Christ knows all about it, and is both able and willing to help.

I. He Knows in what Forms Temptation may Come.—Illustrate how temptations come in school-time, in play-hours, when we go forth to business, in our social life, and through our very pleasures. None can be so subtle as to be beyond Christ's knowledge. So He is able always to defend and keep if we will look to Him.

II. He Knows how Weak the Tempted may Feel.—Illustrate from the man who prayed this prayer, "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe"; or from the man who said, "O Lord, I know that it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Or from St Paul, who even gloried in his infirmities, because his weakness made him feel how he needed Christ's strength.

Show how Christ felt our weakness when He was in Gethsemane. So fully understanding us, we may be sure that "a bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench."

III. He Knows the Secret of the Mastery of Temptation.—For He found out the secret in His own hours of temptation. One secret He found in the desert—the secret of sheltering ourselves behind *God's Word*. Another secret He found in Gethsemane; it was yielding wholly to *God's will*, and committing ourselves altogether to Him. So we may say in our times of temptation, "I flee unto Thee to hide me."

IV. He Knows that None need be "Overcome of Evil"; but, Leaning on Divine Grace, All may "Overcome Evil with Good."—Illustrate from Joseph. Show how our Lord overcame all the evils and temptations that gathered round Him, and impress what a perfect helper He now is to all of us who will look unto Him.

God's Good Care for Us

"He careth for you."—1 *Peter v.* 7.

We often wonder what the children really think about God. We cannot see Him. We may not make any images, or pictures, of Him. And yet we can know Him better than we should if we could look upon Him or touch Him. How can this be?

God shows us what He is by what He does. Give illustrations by selecting, and picturing, two or three Old Testament scenes.

God shows us what He is by taking a human form. We can look at Jesus, and see God in Him. Give two illustrations from the life of Jesus e.g. the woman a sinner; scene of driving out the money-changers, etc., from the Temple.

And there is yet another way in which we can know God, though we may not be able to see Him. He lets us think of Him as our Great Parent—our Father, our Mother. Tell of the orphan child who never knew her father, only the loving care of her widowed mother, and so would only repeat the familiar lines thus—

> "My God, my mother, while I stray,
> Far from my home on life's rough way," etc.

Then we may learn about God from our fathers and mothers. We do not always see them, but we know that they are always caring for us.

What a very wonderful thing is God's care of all His creatures! Illustrate from the tiny, short-lived gnats, that flit about in the summer evenings. God cares for each one, giving it life and food and pleasure and work.

But there is something that is even more wonderful. It is God's gentle, loving, watchful care of us, of you and of me. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." "Ye are of more value than many sparrows."

I. God Cares for Us because He made Us.—Illustrate the interest which a boy has in the toy which he has made himself, or the girl in the doll which she has dressed herself. Then how much is involved in saying, God made us!

II. God Cares for Us because He so well Knows what we Need.—Illustrate how boys care for their pigeons or rabbits. This care of God we call His providence. Tell of the house at Chester whose inmates were preserved in time of plague, and which bears the inscription, "God's providence is mine inheritance." Give other incidents of providential care. "Your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."

III. God Cares for Us because He Sees all our Troubles.—Illustrate by the kind man speaking to a crying child in the street. Also by cases of God's help in trouble, such as the story of Lazarus and his sisters.

IV. God Cares for Us because He is so Sad about our Sins.—Do you know how sad mothers are about bad, naughty children? It makes them full of care, of care that grows to be anxiety. Tell of the parents who left the door always on the latch, praying and hoping that their poor erring daughter would, some day, come back.

Now I must tell you of the great proof of God's care for us. He gave His Son. Tell the story of the widow's only son, who gave his life in trying to save the shipwrecked poor boy. That great care of God, that great gift of God for us, pleads with each one of us, saying, "My son, give Me thy heart."

Always Able

"Our God is able."—Dan. iii. 17.

What a nice thing it is to have someone *able* to help us. You have hurt yourself, or are suddenly ill, and the doctor comes and helps you to get rid of the pain, because he is able to give remedies, and tell you what to do; but sometimes we find that friends can do nothing for us—they are all wishing to help, but not able. You want a new place, or to find someone or something you have lost; or you so want a fine day. None of your friends can help you; but the One Who is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think." Many a rope has broken and a branch snapped when too much weight is put on it; but you may lean harder and harder on this Strong Friend, and you will find Him always *able*.

I. Able to Save.—Yes; thieves, murderers, and the very worst have gone to see if His power was able to save them and make them fit for His spotless home, and all alike who came have heard the promise, "Able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him." So your own name may be now written in the Book of Life, and you may be ranked amongst Christ's own if you come to Him and ask Him to take you, and believe that He is willing and able to save you.

A Jewish story of the Passover might show us how safe and sure we may be even now in this life.

The eldest little Jewish girl of one household knew that that very night the destroying angel would go round and destroy the first-born in each house where there was no blood on the door-post. She, therefore, would be the doomed one of that home. Often through the night she woke crying, "Oh, father, go out and see once more that the blood is still there," and at last she begged her father to carry her out and let her see for herself. But—oh, the horror! no blood was there. A servant had been ordered to put it, but had forgotten it. The parents ran, for it was near midnight. They placed the blood clearly on the posts, and when the child saw it she went off satisfied to her sleep. She knew the promise of safety was for her—"When I see the blood I will pass over."

II. Able to Succour.—How we worry over some sum or hard lesson, or some difficulty, forgetting that "All the power is His," and we may call in that aid.

There is a story told of an Ambassador who, with his faithful servant, was ordered into a foreign land. He could not sleep. Tossing, he lay, and wishing he might stay at home, where things were in a very troubled state. During the night the servant came in to ask his master if he could help him. "No," said the master. "I can't rest. My mind is so troubled. If I might remain here all might go well; but if I go abroad I don't know what will become of our country." "Master, don't you believe God governed the world before you came into it?" "Certainly." "And don't you think, sir, that He will govern it after He has taken you out of it?" "I do, of course." "Then, sir, don't you think you might safely leave Him to govern it while you are in it, without being so much troubled!" It was true. One thought of God's mighty power, one real call to Him to succour and aid, and the wearied, anxious mind was at rest, and all was left to God's keeping. To know that God is able to help, ought to keep our minds at peace—yes, perfect peace.

An old negress, I once read of, lost a husband and six sons in a very short

time, and the poor old woman was left alone in the world. A neighbour passing heard the poor desolate thing saying over and over to herself, "The Lord will make it all straight." She was asked, "Are you sure of that? What makes you so sure? Can He make all straight now you've lost everybody you loved?" "The Lord Himself says it in the Book, and doesn't old Nannie know it in her heart? Yes; Nannie knows the Lord's on her side, and He's going to help her to bear it. He ain't agoing to leave her now when the troubles is come upon her." Oh, how great a peace to know that He that is on our side is "able to succour us."

III. Able to Subdue.—We want now and hereafter—the power to subdue our angry feelings—our bitter words—our powerful temptations; and by and by to subdue even death itself. Till our lives end, we are to be His soldiers and servants; so under Him we must fight our many enemies. Sometimes it is the fear of man: "What will people think of me?" Even that fear He can subdue, and make us place first this question—"What will the Master think?"

Then our bitter feelings. Don't you know how sometimes you long to say out the angry words, and to tell someone how you feel the injustice or the unkindness—but, oh, wait one moment and look at Him, your Example. Never one cross or angry word, even though racked with pain, parched with thirst. No sympathy; only taunts and jeers. Even then the patient, tender words, "They know not what they do." So when you feel warm with anger, and full of many a wrong, and you long to speak out and say all you feel, remember Him. Say, "Lord, subdue this also, and make me Christ-like." Then that final fear of death this Mighty Friend can quite subdue.

You say you are so afraid of death, you can't bear to think of it. Yes; there is much to cause shrinking and dread; but when the time comes He will, if asked, take that dread away. Would it be of use now to clothe yourself in winter clothes and wraps of fur because in a few months' time you would be in some ice-bound region? No; you would prepare all—make sure that you had enough to keep you warmly clad when that bitter time began; and then, knowing all was ready, you would be able to busy yourself with other things until the time for going. So I think God would teach us that He gives help at the needed time—living power for these life hours we spend; dying help when death is near. Tell Him you dread that time; ask Him to subdue all fear, and when death comes, you will truly find He is with you, and you pass only from His unseen presence to be with Him "face to face." That perfect fearlessness of death was surely known by that dying soldier who left these lines under his pillow:—

"I lay me down to sleep
With little thought or care
Whether my waking find
Me here or there.
A bowing burdened head,
That only asks to rest
Unquestioning upon
A loving breast."

And so in sleep and fearlessness he passed "through the grave and gate of death" to the presence of the King.

God Our Defender

"*Let those that trust in Thee rejoice, because Thou defendest them.*"—*Ps. v.* 11.

"Let those that trust in Thee rejoice, because Thou defendest them." This is my text just now. It is one of the many beautiful things which David said when he thought of his God.

When men travel through forests where wild beasts, like lions and tigers, roam about in search of prey, they carry with them fire-arms; and when, at night, they lie down in their forest tent to sleep, they light a fire near its door, and then sleep in safety; for wild beasts don't like fire, and keep away from it; so the gun is a defender by day and the fire by night. And when kings travel about in a country where they have enemies, soldiers travel with them—soldiers before them, soldiers behind them, and soldiers on either side of them—with swords by their sides, which they will draw against any man who dares to threaten the life of their king; and at night, when the king lies down to sleep, they camp round about him, keeping unsleeping watch, and thus, day and night, soldiers are his defenders.

And when an army comes against the loved homes of brave men to kill the wives and children, the brave men go out to meet the army and fight it and drive it back again. They are the passionate defenders of their homes. Sometimes the brave men are beaten in the fight and killed, and then their homes are captured and destroyed, and their poor wives and families are put to death, because their defenders are dead.

And this spirit of defence is almost as common among the lower creatures as among men. I have heard of a hawk swooping from its course in the sky down towards some little chickens that were scratching about by their mother's side, to seize one of them, soar up with it, and fly away to devour it; but the mother-hen, seeing the cruel purpose, bravely dashed in between the chickens and the hawk, and, cleverly and tremblingly dodging as the hawk dodged to get behind her, effectually kept it at bay, preferring to be herself pecked by the hawk's sharp beak, even to death, rather than to let her little ones suffer. That mother was a genuine defender.

I have read, too, of a brave stork, which had built its nest on a house, and there had laid its eggs and hatched its young. One day, long before the downy little things could fly, the house unfortunately caught fire. First the stifling smoke reached the nest, and against this the brave stork defended it as best as she could, covering it carefully with her broad wings. With the stifling smoke came great heat, which became greater every moment, till at last the flames appeared. From the eaves they crept and leaped along up towards the ridge where, near the chimney, the nest was built. The heat must have been insufferable. The bird must escape or die. Yet escape she would not; she could not abandon her young. Even dead, she might lie upon them, and cover them from the fire with the scorched feathers of her wings. The fire burned on till at last the roof fell, and then, alas! bird, and nest, and young were all buried in the blazing ruins beneath. That poor faithful stork was a noble defender.

Among the many grand and brave deeds done to defend, none are more grand and brave than one done a little while ago. A nurse at a hospital for sick children was one day sent out with three little patients who had been in the hospital for some time for different diseases, and were now able to take a little air; the eldest of them was only eight years old.

As they proceeded on their walk, they were met by a dog, with foaming mouth, running furiously. No sooner did the dog see them than it at once rushed towards them. The dog was mad. They were all alarmed, and would have made their escape; but, before they had time to move, the dog was almost upon them. Seeing the frightful danger in which the children were placed, the nurse at once threw herself between them and the dog, which then sprung upon her, seized her by the arm, and tore her flesh dreadfully. It would have then attacked the three little invalids, who were behind the nurse, clinging to her dress; but, seeing this, and resolving to prevent it at all costs, she bravely threw herself upon the dog, clasped it in her bleeding arms, rolled over with it, knelt upon it, caught it now by its leg, now by its ears, struggling with all her might. She *must* keep it from the children; for she could bear anything but the idea of the dog getting at the children. The struggle ended by two men coming up, who killed the dog and carried the poor nurse back to her home, where she died. The three little invalids were unhurt. They had had a brave and glorious defender. She lost her own life; she saved theirs.

Now, why have I told you these stories of defenders? Not only to make you think highly of the daring warrior who defends his hearth and home; not to make you admire the stork in the fire, or the hen before the hawk; not even to make you think highly of the nurse-girl who so splendidly braved such frightful dangers, bled, and at length died in her little charges defence, though that would be good. I have a reason far better than these. From tender and strong hearts in the creature, I want you to rise to the tender and strong heart of the Creator. The grandest hearts are but drops of the Creator's love. They have all come down from the One perfect heart. So from admiration of earthly defenders, I want you to rise to admire and to adore the one great Defender—God, and to join them that put their trust in Him. Look up from man to God. Think how *good* it is to trust in kind friends, who, if danger arose, would defend you with their lives, then feel and say, "It is still *better* to trust in the Lord."

But one thing more—remember who it was that said this. It was David, himself a brave defender. It was David, the shepherd who defended his sheep against the lion and the bear. It was David, the king who defended Israel against Goliath and the Philistines. It was David, the father who, if he might, would have saved his son Absalom's life by sacrificing his own. Yes, it was David, the true shepherd, the brave king, the tender father, who felt just what I want you to feel. He felt that God was better than the best shepherd, and better than the best king, and better than the best father; and so the brave man said, "Let them that put their trust in *Thee* rejoice, because *Thou defendest them*."—*Rev. B. Waugh.*

The Advocate

"*We have an Advocate with the Father.*"—1 *John ii.* 1.

The word "Advocate" here means one called to help another. It is now chiefly used of one who pleads a cause. And in this sense, as well as in the wider one, Jesus is our Advocate.

Have you ever been in a law court, I wonder? If not, ask your parents, the first time you are in a large town, to take you to one. There you will see the judge upon the bench, looking very solemn, but very calm; at the side, the culprit at the bar, looking very anxious and perhaps downcast; and, in front of the bench, the advocate, busy with his papers, and very eager to make the most of his case.

Now, our text speaks of a case being tried. Who is the Judge? God, the Judge of all the earth, seated on His eternal throne. And who is the culprit? You or I, who have broken God's holy law. And who is the Advocate? Ah, who? Not ourselves—not any other man—else there can be but one sentence—Death! But He—Jesus—is the Advocate Whom we can trust—Whom multitudes have trusted, and not in vain.

Men esteem an advocate who is able, earnest, fair, successful; and "Jesus Christ the Righteous" is all this. 1. He is infinitely wise. When any case is committed to Him, He can take in all its bearings at a glance, and knows exactly how to represent it. 2. He is entirely earnest, and pleads as though He were pleading for His own very life. 3. He is absolutely fair, and does not attempt to hide the very worst that can be truly said against those He argues for. 4. And He is always successful. Millions have looked to Him for aid, and He never once has lost a case He undertook. For He has an argument that cannot fail, and that is—Himself, as the Sacrifice for sin.

Will you not ask Him to plead for you? Commit yourself to Him. Say to Him: "Lord Jesus, by my Advocate!" Then, when the throne is set, and the books are opened, and the dead, small and great, are summoned for judgment—and you among them—your Advocate will stand forth on your behalf and say: "This soul is guilty; but I have paid the penalty: for My sake this sinner shall go free!"

And not only will the knowledge that Christ is on your side give you boldness in the day of judgment, but it will give you present peace. It will be with you as with an old countryman. "The devil," said he, "was tempting me the other day, and I tried to answer him; but I found he was an old lawyer, and understood the law a great deal better than I did. So I ceased, and would not argue any more. He went on troubling me about my soul. But I just said: 'I have given that over into the hands of Christ. I have transferred everything to Him. If you want an answer to your doubts and queries, you must apply to my Advocate.'"—*Rev. C. A. Salmond, M.A.*

"Prayer"

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you."—St John xvi. 23.

I wish you to notice very carefully the words I have just read. Consider, in the first place, who they are to whom our Lord is speaking. They are disciples—persons who love the Saviour—sons of God. The promise, then, of the text, is not made to everybody, but only to a certain class of people. I might perhaps say to my children, "Go into the house, and take whatever you like, and keep it for your own"; but I should not say so to the boys in the street. So when Christ tells us that whatsoever we ask for shall be given us—He is not referring to the world at large. He takes in no more than those who believe in Him, and love Him, and serve Him. Consider, in the second place, that the promise itself is limited. The Saviour does not say, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father, He will give you," for we might ask for hurtful things, for things the possession of which would be a real injury to us; but He adds the words, "In My name." These words make a great difference, which I will do my best to explain to you by and by. For the present, just remember that God does not undertake to bestow upon us everything we ask for, but only everything that we ask for *in a certain way.*

Bearing then these two points in mind, let us consider together the subject of prayer.

I. In the first place, it is well for us to endeavour to understand what prayer

is, and what prayer is not. It is certainly *not* repeating so many words. If you ever "say" your prayers without thinking, without considering that God is listening to you, without caring whether you do or do not receive the things which you ask for—whatever you may have done, you have not really prayed, and you cannot expect that God will be pleased with your conduct. There are some people, I have been told, who write their prayers on the outside of wooden cylinders; and then, by means of a wheel, or by a contrivance resembling the sails of a windmill, make the cylinders turn frequently round; and every time the cylinder turns, the people think that another prayer has been offered, and that God will hear and answer them. "How very foolish!" you say. Yes; it *is* foolish; but not more foolish than the behaviour of some persons calling themselves Christians, who repeat a number of petitions, whilst their hearts are wandering far away, and even their minds are scarcely conscious of the occupation they are engaged in. Prayer, then, my dear children, is not repeating a form of words, however good and holy those words may be. What is it, then? Well, it is *speaking with God*; for you must remember that when we talk about prayer, we do not mean only asking. If you feel that God is your Father, your loving and gracious Father in Heaven —as I trust you all do—you will have very much to say to Him. You will have to express your reverence for His Name, your wonder at His greatness, your admiration of the beauty of His character, your awe at His infinite holiness and purity: and this is *adoration.* And then you will feel that you must express your gratitude for His loving-kindness and tender mercy. He is so very good to you, that you will not be able to keep silence: and this is *thanksgiving.* Then, again, you will be obliged—I mean obliged by your own feelings—to tell Him how sorry you are for having acted wrongly, and for having done or thought or said things which were unbecoming a Christian child, and which were really sinful. You will have to tell Him sometimes about bad temper, or envious thoughts, or selfish or greedy actions, or carelessness in religion, or disobedience to those set over you, perhaps sometimes about untruthfulness and insincerity: and this is *confession.* So you see prayer means many more things than mere asking. Asking God to give you blessings is a very important part of it, but it is only one part: there is adoration, and praise, and confession, and thanksgiving, besides—and I think that upon the whole it would be correct to say what I said just now—that prayer is speaking with God.

Now if you speak to a person, you must believe three things: first, that there is such a person; secondly that he hears you; and lastly, that he will attend to what you say. You believe that there is a God. Of course. No one really doubts *that.* "The fool," according to David, "said in his heart, There is no God"; but he did not really believe what he said. He wished to believe it, he tried to believe it; but, fool though he was, he could not quite succeed. Well, you are sure that there is a God; and then you are sure that when you pray, God hears you. "Of course," you say: "Of course I am sure of that, because God is in every place, and because He sees everything; and there is not a word on my tongue, or a thought in my heart, but He knows it altogether. I have not the least doubt that God hears me whenever I pray." Yes: but now as to the third point. Are you sure that God attends to what you say? and are you sure that He will accept your praises, and grant your requests? *You must think about it.* Now I will tell you what to think; and this shall be the second division of my subject.

II. God will attend to you, if you ask *in the name of His Son Jesus Christ.* But what is asking "in the name of Christ"?

Suppose, my dear children, I were to go to the door of Buckingham Palace,

and ask to be admitted to see the King, in order that I might present a petition to him: do you think that they would admit me? Certainly not. I should be told that there was a certain way in which my petition must be presented so as to reach His Majesty, and that unless I complied with the rules laid down for the purpose, there would be no chance whatever of my obtaining my request. In fact, somebody must present the petition for me: I may not present it myself. You understand me, do you not? Now if I wish to obtain a certain blessing from the King of kings, Who alone can bestow it? I may not go to Him and say—"O God, Thou art good: give me this blessing"—for that is not the way in which man can approach the Divine Majesty. It is very likely that the holy Angels may use such a form of address—but then they have never fallen. But men have fallen, and are sinful; and in consequence of sin, there is a particular way appointed by which you and I must draw nigh to God. We must get the Lord Jesus Christ to speak for us. He Who is the Son of God will come for us into the presence of the Father, and be our Advocate before the Throne above. He will undertake our cause; and what blessings we receive we shall receive for His sake, because He is interested in us and pleads for us. You see, then, what we must say: "O God, I am not worthy to receive this blessing; but give it me, I humbly beseech Thee, for Jesus Christ's sake. O Lord Jesus, plead for me, that I may obtain this blessing. I know that I can obtain it only through Thee." This is what is meant, or this is in part what is meant, by asking "in the name of Christ."

Now notice, in the next place, that those who pray in such a way are sure to be willing to leave it to God to answer their prayers just as He thinks best. Their language is, "If it be Thy will, O Heavenly Father, if Thou seest it to be good for me—give me Thy blessing."

There are some things about which we may be sure that it is good for us to receive them. For instance, spiritual blessings: such as knowledge, love to God, purity of heart and purpose, closer resemblance to Jesus Christ. About these things there can be no doubt; for it is clear that the more we have of them, the better it will be for us, and the better our Heavenly Father will be pleased. But when we come to temporal blessings, we cannot be certain whether it will be well for us to possess them or not. Supposing I were poor and wished to be rich—the riches might ruin my soul. Suppose I were sickly and prayed to be strong—the health and strength might make me careless about salvation. We never know. We cannot judge for ourselves in such matters; and so it is wise and right to leave the decision to God, Who knows everything and makes no mistakes. We may ask then, but ask in submission. "If it be Thy will, O Father!" And very frequently our Heavenly Father shows his wisdom and His love by *denying our request*. If I were using some very sharp-edged and dangerous tools, my little child of three or four years old might perhaps ask me to let him play with them. He is pleased with the brightness and glitter of the knives—he thinks them very pretty playthings, and longs to be allowed to handle them; perhaps, too, he cries if I refuse him, and thinks me very unreasonable and unkind. But what would you think of me if I were to grant the request? Why, you would consider me one of the most foolish fathers you ever heard of; for you, young as you are, know that I should show wisdom and love and fatherly care, not by granting but by refusing to grant, my child's request. And sometimes, too, God answers our prayer by seeming to reject it. Let me tell you a true story. It is the story of St Augustine. Augustine, when a young man, was very far from being good. He led an irregular life, and he embraced erroneous views—very unlike the doctrines of Christianity—and gave himself up entirely to the pursuit of worldly pleasure and self-indulgence. His mother, Monica, was as good as he was bad. She

was a very devout Christian woman; and she prayed continually for her son, whose conduct nearly broke her heart. One day Augustine came to tell her that he had decided upon going to Rome, to pursue his profession there. Now Monica dreaded above all things his going to Rome. She thought that if he settled down there, there would not be the slightest chance of his mending his ways and becoming a Christian; and she begged and entreated him not to go. Finding that he was obstinate, and was making his plans for removal to the great city, she betook herself to prayer, and earnestly and frequently besought the Lord to turn her son from his purpose. She prayed the Lord to interfere: to send something which might prevent Augustine from taking the journey. Her prayers, however, fervent and earnest as they were, were not answered—at least, not answered in the way she wished and expected. Nothing happened: the Lord did not interfere; and Augustine, to his mother's extreme distress, set out for Rome and reached it in safety. There—does it not seem as if God had turned a deaf ear to poor Monica's petitions, and refused to listen to them? It *seems* so, but *it was not* so. Her prayers were answered by the very disappointment of them. At Rome there lived a good man, a Christian, and a famous preacher, of the name of Ambrose. Augustine, who was very fond of public speaking, went with a crowd of others to listen to Ambrose's sermons; and, through listening to those sermons he became, by God's blessing, a Christian, and a good and holy man. So you see after all Monica did get the blessing, but by means of the very thing which seemed like a refusal of the blessing.

To ask then, "in the name of Christ," is to ask in submission to the Divine will, and with a desire for the Divine glory. Christians ought to think of God first, and of themselves afterwards. Did you ever notice that in the Lord's prayer we are commanded to pray for several things *before* we remember our own wants? "Hallowed be Thy name," that is one; "Thy Kingdom come," that is another; "Thy will be done, as in Heaven, so on earth," that is a third: and after these come the petitions for daily bread, and for the forgiveness of sins. God first: ourselves after. We *may* ask for temporal mercies. Certainly. For success in our work; for health when we are sick; for money to pay our bills with; for many other things that we want, or fancy we want; we may ask for them: but we must always leave it to our Heavenly Father to grant the request or not, as He judges best. But I think we shall never do wrong in asking for greater and greater supplies of the blessed Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit dwells, it is true, in every real Christian; in every man, woman and child who loves and serves the Lord Jesus Christ. But still He puts forth His power in us more, the more we desire His presence, and the more we ask for it. This is what I mean when I say that we must pray for greater and greater supplies of the Holy Spirit of God. And because the Spirit teaches us, and strengthens us, and makes us able to do what is right, and comforts us, and cheers us, and helps us; because He enables us to know more about the Lord Jesus Christ, and to become more like Jesus Christ—therefore I am sure that you and I cannot be in the wrong if we pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit. What does our Lord say? "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?"

III. I have told you, my dear children, *how* we are to pray: let us consider in the third place *where* we are to pray.

The question is soon answered. Everywhere. Do not let anybody ever persuade you that prayer offered in a certain place is more acceptable to God, and is more likely to be answered, than prayer offered in another. Some think that God will hear us sooner in a church than in a bedroom or a parlour.

This is a great mistake. What God looks to is the heart, not the place. A "church" is not made by the walls, but by the worshippers. "Where two or three," says our Lord, "are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." At the same time you must not suppose that it is of no importance, or of little importance, whether we come to church or not. The fact is this. In the first place comes private or secret prayer. That lies at the foundation of all. If you are old enough to understand, and yet never pray to God of yourself, and by yourself—you may depend upon it that you are not a Christian yet. After that comes family-prayer: and you may depend upon it that there is no true Christianity where there is not family-prayer. Then comes prayer in the congregation, where Christians meet together for united worship, to praise and bless God together, and to join in sending up their petitions to the throne of grace. All three are necessary: but the root and starting-point of all is—private, secret communion with God; that is to say, speaking with God, when you and He are together, and no one else present. And just let me remind you that there is not a time in our lives at which we may not pray. Do you know what is meant by "ejaculatory" prayer? It is rather a long word that—but it means the sudden darting up of the mind and heart to God. When you cannot go down on your knees and offer up a long prayer, you may shoot up, as it were, a short prayer. You may say, "O God, help me! teach me; guide me—for Christ's sake!" And you may say, if you feel that you have done wrong and sinned against God, "O God, forgive me, for Christ's sake." You may utter such prayers in your heart. You may throw them up suddenly to Heaven. And you may do this anywhere—at school, or in your play, or in the drawing-room, or in the street. Wherever and whenever you feel that you need the Divine forgiveness and the Divine help, you may cry to God, and He will hear and come to succour and to bless you.

IV. In the last place, my dear children, remember what the Lord Jesus Christ, and what His holy Apostles have said about prayer. "Pray without ceasing"; "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint"; that is, not to allow themselves to become weary of the work of prayer. I do not think there is any duty so much spoken of in the Bible, as the duty of prayer; and believe me, your greatest enemy would be the man who should separate you from your Heavenly Father, by persuading you not to pray. Imagine this now! God is sitting on His Throne in the centre of the universe, and the whole creation is surrounding Him with the offerings of prayer and praise. The Angels are praising Him, and crying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts"; and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air are blessing Him in their way; and even the inanimate creation—the sun and the moon and the stars, the mountains and rivers and forests, the seasons, the wind and the lightning and the thunder, are glorifying the name of Him Who made them. But one portion of the great family is silent: no voice of prayer or praise goes up from them. And who are they? What part of the great family is it? The race of man. "The race of man!" you say. "Why, God has done more for man than for all His other creatures beside; and can man be silent?" Yes: man has persuaded himself that there is no use in praying; and so, amidst the universal chorus of blessing, man holds his tongue: he takes no part. What would you think of this, dear children? Oh, let no one persuade you to give up praying! But no one will persuade you to do so, I know, if you have the life of God in you—if you are really born again of the Spirit—if you really love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as a living body must breathe, so a living soul must pray. God is your Father in Heaven; and when you begin to speak to your Father, and show Him your trouble and sorrow, and tell Him

how much you love Him, and how deeply you adore Him—who is there that shall dare to forbid you to do so? You will say to anyone who attempts to hinder you—"Get out of my path. Stand aside. I have something to say to my Father, and I must and I will say it."—*Rev. Gordon Calthrop.*

Anecdotes and Illustrations

The Necessity of Struggle.—A naturalist was studying a cocoon, in which a butterfly was struggling to be free. He heard it beating against the sides of its little prison, and his heart went out in pity for the helpless creature. Taking a tiny lancet he cut away the fragile walls and released the little captive. But to his amazement it was not the beautiful creature that he had expected to see. It lay struggling upon the table, unable to walk, unable to fly, a helpless, unlovely object. In place of the gorgeously coloured wings that he had expected to see, were weak, shrivelled members. What was the matter with this creature that should have been so fair? The prison gates had been opened too soon, the obstacle had been removed before the struggler had developed sufficiently through the struggling to be ready for its glorious flight into the sunshiny skies and among the perfumed flowers. Oh, God, when the walls seem to close about us, when we struggle and agonise to be free, when Thou dost not cut away the barriers is it not because, in Thine infinite wisdom, Thou dost see that we are weak and dost want us to become strong? Then, at last, when the struggle is finished, like the butterfly, we may come forth, not perhaps, in glorious robes of splendid colours as it is, but in the everlasting robes of the righteous.

The Uses of Affliction.—There is a little plant, small and stunted, growing under the shade of a broad spreading oak, and this little plant values the shade which covers it, and greatly does it esteem the quiet rest which its noble friend affords. Once upon a time there comes along the woodman, and with his sharp axe he fells the oak. The plant weeps and cries: "My shelter is gone, every rough wind will blow upon me!" "No," says the Angel of the flower; "now will the sun get at thee, now will the shower fall on thee in more copious abundance than before; now thy stunted form shall spring up into loveliness, and thy flower, which could never have expanded itself to perfection, shall now laugh in the sunshine, and men shall say, How greatly hath this plant increased, how glorious hath become its beauty through the removal of that which was its shade and delight!"

Gordon's Half-Hour.—At a funeral service held for General Gordon, the speaker gave the following statement of that good man's faithfulness to his times of daily communion with God: "There was each morning, during his journey in the Soudan, one half-hour during which there lay outside Charles George Gordon's tent a handkerchief, and the whole camp knew the full significance of that small token; and most religiously was it respected by all there, whatever was their colour, creed, or business. No foot dared to enter the tent so guarded. No message, however pressing, was carried in; whatever it was, of life or death, it had to wait until the guardian signal was removed. Everyone knew that God and Gordon were alone in there together, that the servant prayed and communed, and that the Master heard and answered. Into the heart so opened the presence of God came down; *into the life so offered the strength of God was poured*; so that strange power was given to Gordon because his heart became the dwelling-place of God."

The Anchor.—A fleet of a hundred vessels lay at anchor in a port of the Mediterranean, when a fearful storm burst upon them, and drove all save one upon the shore. The wonder was how that one could have held its anchor-

age. It was found that its anchor had grappled into another which lay firmly embedded in the bottom of the sea. So the soul anchored to Christ will be able to outride all the storms of life.

God in Us.—I have a clock in my house, the works of which can be taken out so as to leave standing the face, hands and all. Now if it needs repairing, the workman can come and take out the works, and brush and oil the wheels, and put right whatever is amiss. Or he can bring an entirely new set of works and fit them into the case. Now I once thought that I had a poor set of works in me, and the Spirit of God would come and take them out, and put in another set, and that I should be a new creature in the same sense as that would be a new clock, except the exterior. But I do not believe that Scripture teaches this, nor does experience corroborate this view. God's Spirit develops that which is in us by nature, and teaches us how to use it, and inspires it to a higher endeavour and a better success. God works in us—that is, He stirs up our working power.—*H. W. Beecher.*

Our Help from God.—I have seen a heavy piece of solid iron hanging on another, not welded, not linked, not glued to the spot, and yet it cleaved with such tenacity as to bear, not only its own weight, but mine too, if I chose to seize it and hang upon it. A wire charged with an electric current is in contact with its mass, and hence its adhesion. Cut that wire through, or remove it by a hairbreadth, and the piece of iron drops dead to the ground, like any other unsupported weight. A stream of life from the Lord, in contact with a human spirit, keeps that spirit cleaving to the Lord so firmly, that no power on earth or hell can wrench the two asunder. From Christ the mysterious life-stream flows, through the being of a disciple it spreads, and to the Lord it returns again. In that circle the feeblest Christian is held safely, but if the circle be broken, the dependent spirit instantly drops of. —*Rev. William Arnot.*

Questions on the Collect

1. What two qualities are ascribed to God in this Collect? 2. What does the word "Almighty" mean? and what does "everlasting" mean? 3. What do we ask God to do? 4. Prove from Scripture that God is merciful. 5. What is meant by infirmities? 6. Does it mean mere bodily weaknesses? 7. What do we ask God to do in our "dangers and necessities"? 8. What do we mean by God's right hand?

The Gospel

St Matthew viii. 1-13.

The Cure of the Centurion's Servant

"*There came unto Him a centurion beseeching Him.*"—*St Matt. viii.* 5.

The same afternoon on which the Master had appointed His twelve Apostles, He returned to Capernaum by the rocky dell through which He had passed the previous evening. The modern name of this secluded gorge is "The Valley of Doves," so called from the number of wild pigeons which have their haunts now, as they probably also had then, in its rugged cliffs.

While on the way to "His own city," a number of Jews had come pur-

posely to meet Jesus. They were the "Rulers of the Synagogue," and had evidently something urgent to say to Him.

They had been sent with a message from a Roman soldier. This soldier was an officer of Herod's army stationed in the barracks at Capernaum, with a hundred men under his command. Though an alien by birth, instead of hating the Jews as most Romans did, "he loved their nation." So much did he love it, that he had, as I told you some time ago, built at his own expense a synagogue ("the synagogue—the principal if not the only one of the town) in which his poorer fellow-citizens might worship the God of their Fathers. Gentile as he was, he had evidently been brought to own and worship the Jehovah of Israel, and to become by faith a child of Abraham. While a good and brave soldier, he refused to plunge into all the vices of Herod's wicked court. He rendered unto Cæsar the things that were Cæsar's: but he also rendered unto God the things that were God's.

He was kind to all around him. More than one of the words which Jesus had spoken that morning on the green hill of Hattin—were true in his case. "But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest" (Luke vi. 35). "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

It was no kindness the centurion wished done by Jesus for himself; but he had a servant (a slave)—so St Luke speaks of him—who was lying dangerously ill. He was racked with pain, "grievously tormented"; indeed ready to die; and his master begged earnestly that Jesus would come and heal him.

It is beautiful to read the officer's feelings towards his dying slave. "He was dear to him," or, as that word rather means, "highly valued." There were not many Roman soldiers I fear at that age of the world who would be thus kind to their slaves. These were often captives taken in war—or, if not so, they were bought with money; and their masters thought they had a right to do with them just as they liked; in other words, they treated them very cruelly. But this good soldier thought and acted far otherwise. His dying slave had proved a faithful and trusty dependent in past years. The master will now change places with him. Seated night and day at his couch he will be himself "one that serveth."

Jesus at once said to the Elders of the Synagogue, "I will go."

He had nearly completed His purpose, and indeed, "was not now far from the house" when the good centurion sent some of his other slaves with a new message. What was this?

It was to say to Jesus not to trouble coming all the way; but just to "speak the word," as He had done in the case of the nobleman's son.

"Tell Him," was the message, "I am not worthy to ask so Holy a Teacher to come into my house, or under my roof, but just as I say to the soldier in my ranks or to the slave in my tent, 'go,' and the man does what I bid him; so, if the Good Physician only gives the command, that will be quite enough; my slave will be restored."

What humility this was in an officer of the proudest nation of the world, to utter such things of a companion of fishermen!

Doubtless, however, he must have known well about Jesus. More than likely he had listened to some of His teachings, and seen some of His miracles. Indeed, in that very synagogue which he had built, he may have witnessed our Lord casting out the evil spirit. He had heard about the miraculous draught of fishes, about the crowds that had been cured after the Sabbath-sunset, above all, about the restoration of the nobleman's son. Some of these wondrous works must have convinced him of Christ's ability to heal—that, lowly as in one sense Jesus was, He had mightier than "a band of

soldiers under him"—was "Captain of the Lord's host"—He was possessed of a power greater far than that of Roman legions or the Roman Cæsar. He Who by a distant word could raise up a child—could surely in the same manner cure a poor bond-slave!

How pleased was the Divine Healer with the perfect trust reposed in Him by this half-heathen! He said, "I have not found, no, not in Israel, such true faith as in this Roman soldier!" What a beautiful testimony! No, not among learned Scribes and Doctors; not among rigid Pharisees with their rites and alms and fastings and prayers: no not even Peter or James, or John, or in any of the loved band He had so lately chosen.

The officer might well be prouder of these words than of all the orders of merit which glittered on his breast; or than if he had gained a hundred battles; or been borne in a chariot of triumph from the Campus Martius to the Roman Capitol.

On the return of the servants to the house, they found the simple faith of the soldier suppliant duly rewarded. Their master was happily seated by the side of the lately dying but now reviving man's couch. Jesus had spoken the needed word. The slave was healed.

That Roman officer and his servant suggested a new thought to the Divine Physician. Jesus took the opportunity of revealing Himself as the "Great Sun, Whose light was to lighten the Gentiles." "And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven."

—*Rev. J. R. Macduff, D.D.*

The Centurion's Servant Healed

"*There came unto Him a centurion beseeching Him.*"—*St Matt. viii.* 5.

After Jesus had chosen His twelve Apostles, He went up into a mountain, and preached to the multitudes that followed Him. His discourse is called the Sermon on the Mount, and is written for us in the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of Matthew's Gospel, and the latter part of the sixth of Luke. When it was ended, Jesus went away into the city of Capernaum.

A certain centurion had a servant of whom he was very fond; but now he was sick of the palsy, grievously tormented, and ready to die. When his master, the centurion (who was a Roman officer, commanding a hundred soldiers), heard of Jesus, and of the wonderful cures that He had wrought, he sent to Jesus the elders of the Jews in Capernaum, beseeching Him that he would come and heal the poor servant. These men besought Jesus very much, urging that the centurion was worthy of His favour, for that he, though a Roman, loved the nation of the Jews, and had built a synagogue for them in Capernaum. Jesus went with them, for He was always ready to do merciful actions; He came upon earth to be gracious. When He was near the centurion's house, persons came to Him, sent by the centurion, and saying, "Lord, trouble not Thyself, for I am not worthy that Thou shouldest enter under my roof. Wherefore, neither thought I myself worthy to come unto Thee; but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed." Afterwards came the centurion himself, saying words like these, and adding, "I am a man set under authority, having soldiers under me; and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh: and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." This signified that he believed Jesus to have great power, though seemingly but a poor and humble Man upon the earth; he believed that the hosts of Angels were under the orders of Jesus, just as his own soldiers obeyed him.

When Jesus heard him speak thus, he was much surprised, and turned about to the people following, saying, "Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." No Jew had ever showed such strong belief in Him as did this Roman officer, born an ignorant heathen. Then Jesus uttered a prophecy, that many should come from distant parts of the earth, and sit down in Heaven with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, while the children of the Kingdom (the Jews) should be cast into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth. After saying this, He said to the centurion, "Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee." When he went back to his house, he found that his servant was quite well again.

The Power of Jesus to Heal

"*And as many as touched Him were made whole.*"—*St Mark vi.* 56.

The following passage from one of *Dean Stanley's* "Sermons in the East" will help in the realisation and description of the scene brought before us in this passage:—

"It was after a walk through the village of Ehden, beneath the mountain of the cedars, our last Syrian expedition, in which we visited several of the churches and cottages of the place, that we found the stairs and corridors of the castle of the Maronite chief, Sheykh Joseph, lined with a crowd of eager applicants, 'sick people taken with divers diseases,' who, hearing that there was a medical man in the party, had thronged round him, 'beseeching him that he would heal them.' I mention this incident because it illustrates so forcibly these scenes in the Gospel history, from which I have almost of necessity borrowed the language best fitted to express the eagerness, the hope, the anxiety of the multitude who had been attracted by the fame of this beneficent influence. It was an affecting scene; our kind doctor was distressed to find how many cases there were which with proper medical appliances might have been cured; and on returning to the ship, by the Prince of Wales' desire, a store of medicines was sent back, with Arabic labels, directing how and for what purpose they should be used."

The point presented for our thought is that the power of Jesus to heal all kinds and degrees of disease should illustrate His power to save all, even the chief of sinners.

Show—1. How the poor sick folk heard of Jesus, and were quite excited to go, or get somebody to take them, to Him. Illustrate by the poor paralytic, who got four neighbours to carry him to Jesus; and tell how skilfully they mastered the difficulties in getting near to Him.

2. What an assortment of sufferers there must have been. Describe some.

3. How graciously Jesus listened to all their tales of woe. Never once turning a deaf ear to any sufferer, and if He seemed to speak harshly, as to the Syrophœnician woman, meaning all the time to bless, and only drawing out the suppliant's faith.

4. How easily Jesus healed and blessed.

Apply each to those who, in sinfulness and sins, realise Isaiah's description (Isa. i. 6). All such Jesus is able, and Jesus is willing, to save now.

How can we touch Jesus with a saving touch now? Describe a faith-touch; and a love-touch; the touch of a thankful heart, and the touch of a penitent heart. Apply by referring to the hymn, "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by"; and why may we not touch Him to-day and be healed?

The Healer of Broken Hearts

"*He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted.*"—*St Luke iv.* 18.

The Lord Jesus will comfort all who come to Him.

Repeat the text after me. There are two little words I want you to notice —He and Me. Do you know Whom these words stand for? We might put the word "God" for the first word. Whom did God send into the world? Then we may say, "God hath sent Jesus to heal the broken-hearted."

I Jesus Healed the Broken-hearted Long Ago.—These words were spoken by Jesus. What does Jesus say God sent Him to do? We will learn about some of the broken-hearted ones our Saviour healed.

You have heard of the poor widow whose son was dead. She had no other children—this was her only son—she was following him to the grave. How lonely her home would be! She had no one to comfort her—to work for her. Who was dead belonging to her besides her son? What was she doing as she walked along to the funeral? Who was passing along the same way? He saw the poor woman, knew how sad she was, that she had a broken heart. He wanted to heal it. Do you remember what He did? The men carrying the dead young man stood still, Jesus went to the poor woman—said, "Weep not." Then He went to the young man; told him to arise, to come to life again. Young man stood up, saw his mother standing by. Do you think she would cry now? How happy she was! Not heart-broken. Who healed her broken heart? I will tell you about another broken heart Jesus healed.

Jesus was in a man's house, a woman came in, she had been a very wicked woman; had done many bad things; but now she felt sorry for them, and as she sat at Jesus' feet, and put sweet ointment upon them, she cried very much, and thought of all she had done; her heart was broken for sin. Jesus saw her, healed her poor broken heart. Listen to the dear kind words He said to her, "Thy sins are forgiven thee. Go in peace." Tell me the names of others whose broken hearts Jesus healed (Martha, Mary, His own mother, and Jairus).

Say after me—"Jesus healed the broken-hearted when He was on earth."

II. Jesus Heals the Broken-hearted To-day.—Have you ever seen people with broken hearts? Many in the world have great troubles. Who can take away troubles? Perhaps your mother has had a broken heart if your father has been ill, perhaps died; little brother or sister dead. Mother has been very sad. Who could comfort her? Jesus will comfort all people with broken hearts. How can we ask Him? Jesus does not speak to people as He did when on earth; but He does speak to them, to their hearts—He comforts them.

Whatever has broken our hearts, sorrow or sin, Jesus can heal. He will say "Go in peace." If mother looks sad, if you feel sad, kneel down, say "Dear Lord, heal our broken hearts."

Say after me, "He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted."

God's Care for Us

"*Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you.*"—1 *Peter v.* 7.

Notice how helpful it is to have the same word used for God as can be applied to ourselves. The text speaks of "our care, and also of God's care." If we would cast our care on God, faith must be called into exercise. The

more we realise the fact that God does care for us the more happy we shall be. Our real belief that God cares for us will naturally draw us nearer to Him. Three things God possesses which are necessary to His care for us: Knowledge; power; love.

I. KNOWLEDGE.—Show how wonderful is God's knowledge of created things. He calleth all the stars by names. He knows all the mysteries of nature, which the scientific people are beginning to find out just a little of. He knows every leaf that flutters on a tree, and every seed that lies hid in the ground, and every moth that flies in the evening air, and every trouble that reaches any one of His children. God knoweth the hearts of all men. (Ps. xliv. 21; 1 Kings viii. 39; Jer. xvii. 10.) God knoweth the thoughts of all men. (Isa. lxvi. 18; Ps. cxxxix. 2; Ezek. xi. 5.) God knoweth the works of all men (Jer. xvi. 17; Job xxviii. 24).

II. POWER.—This is one of God's perfections (Gen. xvii. 1; Ps. cxlvii. 5; 2 Peter i. 3). God's power is incomparable (Exod. xv. 11). God's power is irresistible (Deut. xxxii. 39). See how it first lifted up the Heavens and "spread the flowing seas abroad," and carpeted the earth with flower-patterned grass, and threw up the granite mountains. And how it sustains everything in place; ruling over all, so that each shall do its appointed work. All that we can get to know of God's power helps us to feel sure that He can help us, and we may cast our care on Him.

III. LOVE.—See Jer. xxxi. 3; John iii. 16; Rom. v. 8; 1 John iv. 8. We may see God's love in Nature in some of the ways in which He has taught feeble creatures to guard themselves from harm. The soft, and seemingly helpless caddice-worm, is the easy prey of fishes in running fresh-water streams, but God has taught it to gather the sticks and straws of the stream, glue them together as a shield over its back, under which it may move about safely, thrive, and grow.

Lessons. All must admit that God possesses the three things mentioned: Knowledge; power; love; and they should comfort themselves with the assurances that their Heavenly Father careth for them. Knowing His perfections we should be willing to trust Him wholly. Each should ask the question, What return do I make for such undeserved attention?

Is it not reasonable that we should love God, obey God, and pray to God? And doing these things we shall surely be found to be fulfilling the injunction of the text, "Casting our care on Him."

Outline Address on the Hand

"Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him."—St Matt viii. 3.

A wonderful thing is the hand! Only human creatures have true hands. Others, even monkeys, have paws—something like hands, but not so perfect. A hand is the instrument of a reasonable being [Perhaps, on this account, used as a symbol of authority. *Cf.* Num. xxvii. 18. "Confirmation," "Ordination"].

See a doctor use his hand; feeling the pulse; delicate touch to find out "where it hurts." Sometimes seems even to soothe the pain. A surgeon, perhaps, still more wonderful, using his knife with perfect skill; cutting that he may cure. We may shrink at first, but are gratfeul afterwards. [Dr Haughton; operation on tiger's paw held down through bars of cage; rage of tigress watching, but afterwards, when paw healed, tiger and tigress both grateful, would purr like cats when they saw him.] Two stories in to-day's Gospel.

I. THE HAND THAT WAS SEEN.—Picture the scene. The leper and his

loathsome complaint. His appeal, "If Thou wilt, Thou canst." Faith rewarded. The touch which, according to the law, would have conveyed pollution to Jesus, conveyed instead healing to the leper. [*Cf.* Pipe connecting drain with reservoir; either the reservoir contaminated or the drain flushed.] The hand of the Good Physician a channel of life. [May refer to similar cases.]

II. The Hand that was Unseen.—Another person ill—a soldier's servant; his master's anxiety and request. Our Lord's answer, "I will come." Reply, "No need. You can order your servants as I do mine; life and death are at your bidding if you speak the word." Once more faith rewarded; the patient feels the healing touch even though he does not see the Healer!

III. The Hand of God.—Our Lord says that His works were the works of His Father working through Him (St John xiv. 10, etc.). The hand of God like His hand, though we cannot see it. Often read of it in the Bible. Sometimes like the hand of a physician, kindly, tender, stretched out to help; sometimes like the hand of a surgeon stretched out to destroy evil. Always the same object, one way or another, "to make whole." [For illustrations consult a concordance: "hand of the Lord."]

We need the help of God's hand always; and faith in us, too, will be rewarded as was the faith of the leper and the soldier. If we pray the prayer which our Collect gives us, we may be sure that it will be answered.

—*Rev. C. A. Goodheart, M.A.*

The Good Physician

"*For He had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon Him for to touch Him.*"—*St Mark iii.* 10.

There are three things which the miracles of Jesus did, of which it is important for you to think. They proved His commission; they showed His character; and they were signs of His salvation. *They proved His commission;* that is, they made it sure that He was sent from God. You may remember how Nicodemus argued about this. "Rabbi," he said to the Saviour, "we know that Thou art a Teacher come from God: for no man can do those miracles that Thou doest except God be with him." So the Apostle Peter, in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost, speaks of Jesus as "a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you." You notice the expression—"which God did by Him." A miracle is a work of God's doing. No one but God has power to do such a work. When it is done, therefore, at the word of a man, we feel that God must be with him. And if one, at whose word a miracle is wrought, should say to us that he has come to us in God's name, we must give him credit for speaking the truth, unless we could believe that God would lend His power to support a lie. A miracle is God's hand attesting the trustworthiness of the person at whose word it is wrought. If some minister of the Gospel, or any other man, were to work a miracle before your eyes, and say, "Hearken to me, for I have words from God to speak to you"; would you not feel that you ought to believe him? If, for instance, there was a corpse lying on a bed, stiff and cold, and he were to come in and speak of it; and the dead body, at the word, should rise and look, and speak, and move, a living man; how could you refuse to believe that God was there? Think, now, of Christ's wondrous works, and see how fully they proved that He was sent from God. But they also *showed His character.* Any kind of work which none but God can do, will be enough to prove a Divine mission; no matter whether it be judgment or mercy, awful or sweet. To change his

staff into a serpent by throwing it on the ground, and to make it a staff again by taking it in his hand; to hide his hand in his bosom, and pluck it out all leprous, and then, by hiding it again, to send the leprosy away, were the signs that God gave to Moses to convince the people that God had sent him. The plagues of Egypt proved the Divine mission of Moses; but they were terrible and full of death. Now it has often been remarked, that Christ's miracles were all works of kindness. He fed the hungry: He hushed the storm: He healed the sick: He opened the eyes of the blind: He raised the dead, and gave them back to weeping friends. In all this His pity and His love flowed forth to the sons of men. See what a heart of tenderness the miracles of Jesus displayed. But once more, *they were signs of His salvation.* Every one of them was a parable in deeds. They said to those who saw them, that there was another healing, beyond that of the body, needed by men, and brought near by Jesus. When our Lord cleansed a leper, the story told of His power to wash sins away from the soul. When He raised a dead body, the wondrous work said, Jesus can quicken the dead in trespasses and sins. When He made the blind see, the dumb speak, the deaf hear, the lame walk, He was showing that He was able to make the souls of men know God, and serve Him with all their powers. Oh, how His mighty works bespeak the Saviour! Sometimes we find Jesus actually combining the two kinds of healing; as when He healed the paralytic, and said, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee." Can you remember some other instances? Sometimes we see the inward healing, without the other. The woman of Sychar, and that other who washed His feet with her tears, may be given as examples. They were healed of heart plagues.

Now, the miracles of healing wrought by Christ on the bodies of men are past. But the wonders of soul-healing are still happening day by day. I am going to speak of these for a little, and of Christ, the great and good Physician, by Whom they are wrought. In doing so, I shall have some things to say about—I. The Physician, and II. The Patients. About the Physician I have four things to say:—He is able; He is experienced; He is near; and He is alone.

1. He is an able Physician. There are several things required to make an able physician. He must have knowledge and skill, and that in two ways. He must know what the disease is, and then what is the proper remedy to apply. Some medical men have much greater tact in finding out what ails their patients than others. I have heard of a little boy who after a fall seemed to have a small piece of bone standing straight out from a particular part of his arm, raising the flesh and skin. He was taken to several surgeons, who all seemed puzzled to account for the presence of any bone there. But at last one examining the place in a different way, took pincers, and relieved the child at once by extracting a piece of a broken needle. There is great difference, too, in the remedies applied by physicians. A great statesman, not long ago, was supposed by people in this country, to have been killed by the treatment given him by his physicians. Again, a physician, to be truly able, must have love. The power of sympathy, compassion, kind interest, is wonderful in helping a cure. What a difference you have felt when on a sick-bed, between the touch of a mother's hand, and that of a nurse, however tender! There must also be under the hand of a physician, to enable him to effect cures, sufficient medicinal stores. Wounded soldiers, and travellers in distant lands, have died for want of these. Now, is Jesus able in all these respects? He is, O little child, sick of soul, He knows exactly what ails thee. And He has a balm which cures every malady. Do you remember what Bunyan makes the physician Dr Skill administer to Christiana's sick boy?

It was a medicine made, he tells us, in Latin, "of the flesh and the blood of Jesus." There is no cure for all bodily diseases, but Christ's blood suits all sickness of the soul. Jesus heals also by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Some people think that electric fire, made to stream through the body, restores strength. The living fire of the Divine Spirit does heal. I need not add, that the virtue of Jesus' blood and the power of His Spirit can never be exhausted. Then how rich is Jesus in love! No one loves like Him. When He binds up the wounds of sinners, His eye glows with pity, and His hand "drops with myrrh" of loving-kindness. There is, moreover, this wonderful peculiarity about the Great Physician; He never can be sick Himself, or die. You know the most skilful of medical men cannot keep illness always aloof, nor bar death out. But Jesus lives for ever. It is true, He once died; and strange to tell, He could not have cured us of deadly disease if He had not Himself died; but risen again, He dies no more. He lives to heal by His death. You remember the man that was raised by touching Elisha's bones in the grave. Jesus crucified, touched by faith, brings us "health and cure," nay, life everlasting like His own.

2. Jesus is an experienced Physician. My text says that He "had healed many." Every careful reader of the Gospels knows that is so. But besides the numerous cases recorded by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, there were hundreds on hundreds more, that could not all be separately mentioned. I have often thought that the accounts we have of Christ's miracles in the Bible present them to us as the sky shows its stars. If you look up in a clear night to the starry heavens, you will see some orbs very bright and distinct, each shining apart; you will find others crowded together till you cannot distinguish them, only you are sure that there must be a multitude in the glittering space they strew; and you know that if you had a telescope you could discover multitudes more not seen by the naked eye at all. So in the Gospels you have a number of bright miracles separately recorded, shining in the Gospel page, like Vesper or Sirius; but you have also every now and then a verse which tells of many wonders of healing, too many to be told, and therefore massed together like stars in the Milky Way. If, in addition, you could borrow the memory of John or Peter, and look through that as through a glass at the Saviour's life, you would find days thronged with works of mercy not spoken of at all in the pages of the Evangelists. We may hear of these in Heaven. Assuredly, if all the people in Judæa and Galilee, that were healed by Jesus, had been collected into one company, it would have been a great crowd. Yet it would have been as nothing to the throng of healed ones, as to the soul, whom He has gathered around Him in glory. Millions of His patients are in Heaven, and they were healed of all sorts of sin-distempers. Dear children, you cannot have a disease of any kind with which Jesus has not dealt already. Some one of the blessed above could come down to you, if God permitted, and say to you, "I had a disease like yours; I was as sick and ready to die of it as you are; I went to Jesus, and He healed me of my plague." There needs, then, be no fear that our case will baffle the Good Physician's skill. As His knowledge is omniscient, so His experience is as wide as the world and as old as the Fall.

3. Jesus is a Physician always at hand. When the king travels, there is always one of the court physicians in attendance. In a ship carrying a surgeon advice is always near. But very few can secure in this respect the privileges of royalty; and, by land, the physician when needed is often far away. You often read in the newspapers, in the case of accidents or sudden illness, about surgeons arriving, though with all speed, too late to help. But Jesus is ever and everywhere nigh at hand. He is like the air by which life is sustained

and revived—you go nowhere but it surrounds you; you have but to breathe and it enters your bosom with living power. Jesus is with you to help and heal, so soon as you call Him; so soon as you breathe in prayer. You can well understand what an advantage this is. Paul was thinking of it when he wrote these verses in the tenth of the Romans, "But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

4. Jesus is the only Physician. In the healing art among men there are pretenders as well as true physicians. And there are pretenders, too, in the art of healing souls. Many plans have been tried to make men happy and good without a Saviour, but they all fail. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." There is no other who has right to heal men as Jesus has. For to this end He is appointed of the Father. It is a common thing for medical practitioners to get appointments to hospitals or poor districts, and then they are the duly authorised persons to whom patients must be brought. So God has sent His Blessed Son into this diseased and dying world, which is like a great hospital, that He may be called on to heal us. He has sent no other. And there is no other who is qualified to be sent. If any physician would heal the woes of earth, he must be able to forgive sins; he must be able to make peace between God and men; he must be able to change the heart. All this Jesus can do, but there is none besides. O then, dear children, it comes to this, you must apply to the Healer, or remain sick, and die.

But I promised to say something also of the patients of the Good Physician. And I shall ask your attention to three remarks:—

1. There cannot come too many of them. An ordinary physician might easily have patients multiplied beyond his power to attend to them; but the Wonderful Physician of Whom we now speak can attend to a thousand cases at the same moment. You remember that when He was on earth He was much sought after as the Healer of bodily diseases, and the persons applying for help, with their friends made quite a crowd. The text, indeed, refers to one of those occasions. In such cases, I dare say, it was difficult for everyone to get near Him soon enough, and pressing and jostling there would often be. That is a touching story of the friends of the poor palsied man, who, finding they could not get near Christ for the crowd of hearers, went to the house-top, and uncovering the roof let their burden down through the tiles to the feet of mercy. All the world bringing their soul-distempers to be healed would not throng Him now, nor bar each other's way. I should have liked much to see the sick of some district gathered together to get cure from Jesus. There comes the halting cripple on his crutches, hoping to need them no more; there some kind hand, perhaps a little child's, leads the poor blind one near, wondering what it will be to see the sun, the earth, the face of man; there they carry on a litter the paralytic, or the fevered form, that shall need no bed to lie on, returning; there they strive to bring nigh the Holy One some unhappy demoniac, whose evil spirit would tear and rend him, because he has short hour to hold his prey; there the deaf and dumb approach in their awful silence, soon to know the society which sounds bring, and to sing for joy; and there, hanging aloof on the outskirts, crawls one towards the

presence of power and love, whom you may know by his mingled cries, "Unclean, unclean—Lord have mercy upon me." But if we had eyes to see all over the earth and into the hearts of men—what still more wonderful troops of applicants for health of soul would we behold!—children by their little couches; sick men on their solitary wanderings out in deserts; spirits solitary in their wrestling though in thronged churches; wretched victims of vice and poverty in cellars and dens; stricken sinners in gorgeous palaces—ah! shall I suppose among them some little child sitting in a home-circle, hearing this sermon? This I know, if there should be such a youthful hearer going in his heart to Christ for healing now, Jesus will not put him away or put him off because He has too many others to attend to.

2. A second thing about the patients is this—they cannot come too soon. Not you, my little hearer, whose knowledge of words hardly enables you to understand what I mean when I say it; not even you would go too soon. You have disease in your heart, deadly as poison. You need to get it cured. You need to be taught to love Jesus, to love good, to love your Father in Heaven—unless, indeed, His kind Spirit has taught you these lessons already. Thus no one with this disease of sin in his soul can go too soon to be cured. Did you ever know a boy with aching head that was afraid of the pain leaving him too soon; or with a wounded hand that feared the hurt would be too quickly healed? Well, I have known some boys that so much liked the exemption from school-lessons which some slight illness gave them, that they felt the illness was not difficult to bear, and almost liked it. But if such had been told the illness might soon ripen into death, how earnestly would they have desired to get quit of it! Now sin is a fatal disease. People die of it very fast. It is not a thing to be trifled with. Some dire maladies must be taken at once to the physician, or all his art will be in vain. We cannot say this in regard to Christ; He can heal in the most desperate cases if once brought to Him: but then, if you delay, you may not be able to go to Him. You may have no time to do it, or you may have no heart. If you were stung with an adder, you would not wait till your veins were getting on fire with the poison before seeking for an antidote. You have been stung, the poison is in your blood—O look, as God has bid you, and live. A little longer, and you may be unable to look.

3. But I would like to say also—that the patients cannot come too late. If you have long delayed, if your disease is very bad—never mind, still come. "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by Him." Let us see this truth illustrated by a story you will all recognise. One day, long ago, the sun grew suddenly dark at noon, and a strange gloom spread over the world for several hours. During those hours, under the deep shadow, on a little height near Jerusalem, three men were dying on crosses. Two were thieves, One was an innocent sufferer. He was in the middle. After a time, one of those by His side began to think of his sins, and of the Holy Jesus near him. He saw in Him a Saviour. He cried to Him to save. He said, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom." He was answered. "To-day," said the dying Lord, "shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." The darkness clears away, the middle Sufferer is dead, the soldiers break the legs of the others, and they die too. But the spirit of the Blessed Jesus was waiting for the soul of His healed one in the happy land. He came very late, yet found it not too late, since he came.

Let these three particulars hem the hearers in. Come all, you cannot make too many—come now, it is neither too soon nor too late; only come.

I close by asking, Will you come? will you be patients of the Good Physician? Do not shrink from applying to Him: He is not harsh, nor stern.

Do not be afraid to confess your sins: He will wash them away. I have seen a little child who had cut her hand suddenly clap her other hand upon the place, covering the wound, and struggle against even a mother's touch that would withdraw the shield, and lay the hurt bare. But I have seen that child, when the blood was washed away, and the wound dressed, remembering the misery no more. O poor soul, open thy wounds, and let the balm drop in.

There is a very beautiful picture in one of the Old Testament ceremonies that I should like to leave sweetly dwelling in your minds, as an image of the healing of Christ. When the leper was to be declared clean, two birds were to be taken, and one of them was to be killed over running water. But do you remember what was to be done with the other? It was to be dipped in the blood of the bird that was killed, and let loose into the open field. I would like you all to be like that little bird—cleansed by the blood of the slain Jesus sprinkled on you, and living free in the Spirit of the Lord. Little child of air, singing happy songs, soaring up into the blue, meeting the sun, kept by the Heavenly Father, with the blood mark of salvation on thee—such I would have thy soul be, thou young hearer of this word about the Great Healer.—*Rev. J. Edmond.*

The Centurion's Servant Healed

"I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel, etc."—St Luke vii. 1-10.

Our Blessed Lord had been speaking the gracious words, which are recorded in the previous chapter of this Gospel. And "When He had ended all" those precious "sayings in the audience of the people, He entered into Capernaum."

Capernaum was called the Lord's "own city," because He lived there so much, and did there so many of His mighty works. You remember, that it was in this very Capernaum, that certain things had already happened. A certain nobleman had gone from thence to fetch Jesus, beseeching Him to come and heal his son. It was also in this town, that the chief ruler of the synagogue had gone to Jesus, on behalf of his sick and dying daughter. And then, a woman with an issue of blood came to touch the hem of His garment. Here then had the chief ruler and a nobleman gone to Jesus—one on behalf of his son, the other on behalf of his daughter—and here we are told, that a certain centurion sent to Jesus, on behalf of his servant. The first, then, had come about his son; the second had come about his daughter; and the third had sent about his servant: the nobleman for his son—the chief ecclesiastic for his daughter—the centurion for his servant.

Now, let us inquire, for a moment, about this centurion—who and what he was. He was a captain in the Roman army. You know that Rome, at that time, had overrun the civilised world; there was hardly a nation that pagan Rome had not subdued. Cæsar lived in his palace at Rome, and governed these outlying provinces; and here he had put his foot on the neck of Galilee. And, at this time, Capernaum was garrisoned by Romans—and the Jews there felt exactly as we should feel, if there were a French garrison in this town. We know that the Romans had garrisoned Capernaum, amongst other places, with Roman soldiers; this centurion had soldiers under him, holding that town for the Emperor.

What, for instance, must the French have felt when the Prussians took possession of their cities, occupied their strongholds, possessed their public buildings and the chief places of concourse, and proclaimed themselves

masters? Just as the Jews regarded these Romans in Capernaum, and this centurion, who was the captain of the soldiers who held it. He was a captain with a regiment of soldiers under his command; and under him, they commanded and regulated that town. Well, this man, then, was a captain in the Roman army, whose chief commander, and whose soldiers too, probably, were all worshippers of idols. Here is the servant of a heathen Emperor, holding this Jewish town, and a servant of his, "who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die."

St Matthew tells us a little more on this point—that he was a paralytic, and very "grievously tormented." (viii. 6). This servant had, evidently, had a paralytic stroke, and was held under very severe sufferings, at this time; but he was "dear" to his master.

Can we find out how this had come to pass? It was not merely that he was "dear unto him," but that he was precious in his sight. It was not only that he esteemed, but that he valued him—that is the word—the master valued his servant very greatly, and loved him very much. What sort of a notion had he about a servant, about his servant? He lets it out, presently, when he says, "I say to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." This was the man—we see he was a real, true, intelligent servant. "He not only does what I tell him, but he does not need the way chalked out exactly where he is to go, nor to be told what to do in such and such particular circumstances—but I simply say, Do this, go and transact that business, and I believe the man has intelligence to do it, and I believe he has integrity to do it. I trust him, because he has intelligence and integrity. I say to him, Do this—transact this business, and what happens? It is done."

That was the man who now lay sick—a man who had so endeared himself to his master, acting in all intelligence, and in all integrity, in his position—had so wound himself round and round his master's heart, that when he was sick, the heart that he had wound himself round was well-nigh breaking. The centurion had a servant—who was "dear unto him—precious unto him—and he was sick"—stricken down—no longer able to do his business, though he still had the intelligence and the will; but there he lay—"grievously tormented."

We see here the picture of a good master, and clearly, too, the picture of a good servant. There are immense complaints made of servants by some people; they tell you there is not a good servant to be found; and if you go amongst another class, they will tell you there is not a good master to be found, almost anywhere. And why is this? Not because it is impossible for anyone to be a good master. If anybody was likely not to be a good master, it was a centurion in the Roman army—the commander of a garrison-town of conquered, subject people. Yet there he was—a good master—I do not mean, merely good in paying wages, and executing righteousness, but a master who cared for his servant, and had a feeling of affection for those who served him, and were round about him. And, surely, it is not impossible to be a good servant. If ever it was difficult to be a good servant, it was there, in a Romish garrison in a town, where it was difficult to be even decently moral, or commonly upright. This man was a private in the Romish idolatrous army that was putting its feet on the neck of the conquered people. We know what soldiers are, when they are let loose, in a conquered town, to pillage—and what, too, is the arrogance of the people, who feel they belong to the conqueror; and surely there would be every temptation to be immoral, to be godless, to partake of the open notorious sinfulness of the heathen, in the place where this man was found.

Yet here, in the most unlikely place in the world, we find a good master,

and a good servant; and the two so bound together, that, when the servant is afflicted, the heart of the master is filled with grief.

"And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto Him the elders of the Jews, beseeching Him that He would come and heal his servant." People could scarcely help hearing of Him in Capernaum, where He had been doing such wonderful works. Surely, it would have been a strange thing, if there had been any, in this town of Capernaum, who had not heard of Jesus Christ! I dare say many were as ignorant as if they had never heard Jesus Christ's name, but, in this case, it was a blessing even to have heard of Christ, and of what He could do.

And another thing is remarkable. If there was anything the Jews hated above all others (except a publican—they hated the publicans, because they regarded them as traitors, and guilty tools of the people who were trampling on them) it was the soldiers who kept them in subjection. They did not look with a friendly eye on these Roman soldiers, who were there to keep them subject. To go back to my illustration—if the French were here, garrisoning our town, claiming our money and our provisions, and keeping us in subjection, we should not be likely to regard them with very kindly feelings; they would not be likely to get any of us to do any great kindness for them. Yet we find that this Roman centurion goes to the very "elders of the Jews"—to those who stood at the head of religion in Capernaum, to Jairus and all the rest—and gets them to go to Jesus for him, on behalf of his sick servant. The captain of a regiment would be a proud man, and hold his head up; he would not stoop to ask favours of those whom he was so accustomed to regard with contempt—yet, for the sake of a slave—not a hired servant—not one who was hired by the year and received wages—but for one whom, according to the Roman law, the centurion held as a slave, he could go and ask the Jews—he asks them to go. He puts everything in motion. His dear servant, so grievously tormented, is so "dear to him that he stops at nothing. Very likely he went to the nobleman whose son had been healed —very likely he asked the ruler of the synagogue whose little daughter Jesus Christ had raised, and, perhaps, even the woman who had had an issue of blood to join in the deputation. He asks them all to go to Jesus and plead with Him on behalf of his servant, of his slave, who was "grievously tormented."

What a picture is this man! When he looks on the servant, whom he loves, in grievous torment, he cannot bear the sight. How earnest should we be when we read what was said of one—"In hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments"; and you remember his words—"Send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame." (St Luke xvi. 23, 24.) How earnestly ought we to be desiring that Jesus would put forth His exceeding great power to stay the possibility of any one's falling into those torments! Look at this man—so eager is he, when he sees his servant in torment, that he asks those elders of the Jews, if they will go to yonder house up the street, where Jesus had entered in the afternoon of that weary day, when He had healed the leper after preaching that long sermon—he asks them to go with all reverence and all respect, and beseech Him to come and heal his servant.

It is a touching, but a very instructive, sight. Look at these men—they hear, they are willing, they go. You might say, there never was a man in a position where he was less likely to win the respect, the confidence, the esteem of those amongst whom he lived, than this centurion—yet he had so got it, that they were, evidently, willing to do anything for him. He has only to ask, and away they go and do it. How strange it is! Why is it that this man is so respected? People say, "What can I do? I can never influence

anybody." If a Roman centurion could influence Jews in Caupernaum there is no child of God who need despair of exercising influence for good on anybody. No one ever had greater difficulties to contend with, or greater prejudices to surmount, than that man when he went there; and now he asks the Jews to go, not for himself, but for his poor slave! Who cared for his slave? When did any Roman centurion care a fig for his slave? No—no more than he cared for his dog. But this man did. Why? Because there was something in him, that caused him to feel and act as he did.

"When they came to Jesus, they besought Him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom He should do this." What strange language is this! Look at the estimate these men have of the character of this Romish centurion. They do not say, "He is a Gentile dog." That is the way the Jews then spoke of Gentiles. They do not say that—they do not say he is not worthy to be helped—this Gentile soldier, with soldiers under him. They do not go to Jesus, coldly indifferent, because they are frightened at his power as a soldier, who could visit it on them, if they did not do it; but they go with all their hearts, and say, "He is not a common man, he is not an ordinary man—he is a "worthy" man—worthy of a miracle. "He was worthy for whom He should do this."

That man had evidently won their hearts! What must there have been in him, to bring the Jews so to estimate his character? There he was in their midst, and they would, naturally, have hated the very sight of him—yet they will go to Jesus, and beseech Him, and that "instantly," to heal this man's slave. There is no excuse for people's not having influence. Let us only act from the same principles, from the same motives, in the same way, that this man did, and we shall get influence. We need not make a noise about it. Don't think that he made a noise—very likely he made no particular profession of kindness when he and his regiment came in. Very likely he came in quietly and let people find out the truth about him—preaching by his life, rather than by his lips. Where is the worthiness in their estimate? "He loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue," though he was the servant of the conqueror, one of the hated Roman nation.

It was a blessing for this man that he had been sent to Palestine from Italy, that he had come in contact with Divine truth! Here was a man who had, evidently, been seeking the salvation of his soul, a man who had been led to ask, What will become of me? who had been led to believe that his soul was immortal, and to ask what would become of that soul, and whether he could be delivered from the heathenism in which he dwelt. In coming into "Immanuel's land," he had learnt the truth that was only to be found there—of the Eternal, and of the way to the Eternal, and of the meeting-place with the eternal Judge and Lord of all. And he had found there, though darkly and dimly yet, that hope was rising within him. He had heard there of a Mercy-seat, he had heard there of the great truths of the Old Testament dispensation, which told him that God was in the world, that God was to be approached by sprinkled Blood. "He loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue." Well might he love it! He could never have learnt the way to God, in Italy—he could never have learnt, in Italy, how he might approach the Lord of all. But in that nation, despised though it was, were "the oracles of God"—"the testimony of Jesus" in types and symbols. Dim and dark it had been really. Now the great Light itself was beaming around them—though it was shining "in darkness." If a man has eyes to see he can grope his way even by starlight; but the man, who has no eyes, stumbles even when the sun in shining at its brightest. So was it with this man—the Spirit of God had opened his eyes to see the need of his soul, and

to see what could supply that need—and though it was but starlight with him he groped his way on. And thus they speak of him—"he loveth our nation."

And what does love do? Love always acts. When love gets into the heart, it acts. "He hath built us a synagogue." He said, "I want all you Jews to learn, more particularly than you have yet been able, about the truths of your own Scriptures. I want you to have the prophets read every Sabbath Day—and to have a place where you can hear the testimony which has given me some little hope. I will build you a synagogue"—perhaps the very synagogue of which Jairus was the chief ruler. He had built a synogogue for the Jews. This was how the man had come to be a blessing in Capernaum—he built them a meeting-place, where men might hear Moses, and hear the prophets, and hear the testimony of Him Who was to be born for them—of Him Who should bear their sins.

"Then Jesus went with them." In the other Gospel we are told that Jesus said, "I will come and heal him." He had not said that to the nobleman; to him He had said—"Go thy way, thy son liveth"; He did not even speak to Jairus—but just got up and went. But, in this case of the centurion's poor slave, He acts differently, and says, "I will come and heal him." And He goes—making his way on to the centurion's servant. After He had started the centurion hears that Jesus is coming; and now he sends his own natural "friends, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not Thyself; for I am not worthy—(he uses another word—it is not befitting—it is not beseeming) that Thou shouldest enter under my roof." Therefore he thought himself "not worthy." You know what the Jews thought about it; they said, "He is worthy." Then we see what he thinks of himself—"I am not worthy."

That is just as it should be. A true Christian never thinks himself worthy, but he makes everybody else think that he is worthy—not by his profession, far from it, but—by his life of practical godliness. "Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto Thee, but much less do I expect that Thou shouldest come to me, and do these great things." "He stood afar off and would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast." (St Luke xviii. 13). "I am not worthy." It is the spirit of the poor publican. What had this man learnt? He had learnt evidently, first, that he was not worthy that Christ should come to him—and then, next, that he could not do without Christ's coming to him. A great trouble had taught him that. He feels first, that he is not worthy; and then, second, that he cannot do without Christ. He is not worthy to come to Christ, yet he must have Him and His very present help.

"But say in a word, and my servant shall be healed." What a grand thought concerning Christ! You know how he illustrates it. It shows how he had been turning the thing over in his mind. That is the way to get at the truth, not to sit down and say it is very fine—but to turn it over and over till you get at the truth. Now he brings it out—"I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." "I also am a man set under authority—I am not the highest. I am only a captain—there is the Major, and the Colonel, and the Commander-in-chief, and then the Emperor. I am under authority, and very low down too; there are many over me—yet I have non-commissioned officers and privates under me, and though I am not their chief master, what do I do? I say to one, Come, and he never thinks of not coming. I say to another, Go, and he never thinks of disobeying. He comes, he goes, because I tell him—and yet I am not the Emperor, nor the General, not even the Colonel, but only 'a centurion.' He goes, and the other comes, and I say to my servant,

Do this. When I give him anything to do, he does not expect me to mark it all out for him. I say, Do it—transact that business, transact it satisfactorily let it be done, let it be complete, not in a foolish or slovenly way—but let it be done. And he does it."

"When Jesus heard these things He marvelled at him." Because He had all the faculties of man's nature, and was capable of exercising all those faculties, therefore He was capable of marvelling. He was capable of feeling every feeling of humanity, without a spot or stain, and so He "marvelled." What a thing truly to marvel at, Jesus seems to say to us! He says in His heart, "I have found none like this; this man knows Me, he appreciates Me, he thoroughly comprehends and understands Me."

The man says, "I am under authority: Thou, Lord, art not under authority, for Thou art God over all. I am under—Thou art 'over all, God, blessed for ever.' (Rom. ix. 5). And therefore if I say, Go, and he goes; Come, and he comes; Do this, and it is done, Thou—Who didst once say, Let there be light and there was light—Thou Who didst once command all things into being—surely Thou needest not to come. I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come—Thou canst say the word, and my servant shall be healed."

"And Jesus marvelled at him, and turned Him about and said unto the people that followed Him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." "Not in Israel"—not amongst all the Jews—born Jews—who had had the Bible in their hands ever since they had been able to hold it—"not in Israel" with all its prophecies, with all its prophets, and priests, and symbols—"I have not in Israel found any that know Me as this man knows Me."

"And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick." Now, let us just pick up the threads of this discourse. Look at the illustration of what the poor leper said—"Thou canst." Here was a poor centurion, in the dimmest possible twilight, but he sees the power of Jesus to heal and to save, power to deliver one from grievous torment, and he believes that Jesus is God—that, by a word, He is able to do it. He knows he is not worthy to come into His presence, yet he asks Him. He is bowed down in the lowest humility, yet he glorifies Jesus by the most wonderful faith. It is the bough of the tree, that is most heavily laden with precious fruit, that bends lowest to the earth. Here is a man with most wonderful faith, yet bowing down; conscious of his unworthiness, he comes lowly, loving, anxious, in earnest, pleading even for another; and he finds that Jesus accepts the challenge, and delivers the servant that is so dear to him, from his grievous torment, so that he goes on his way rejoicing.

There are, here, a great many wonderful lessons to be gathered up—about Jesus and His power—about grace and its operation in the heart—about what should influence, guide and govern us, in all our dealings with our fellows, and in seeking blessing for those whom we love. We have a sight of startling power, revealing Jesus as a Saviour Who can deliver from grievous torment, yea, even from eternal torment.

And He will be "enquired of to do this" for us (Ezek. xxxvi. 37), and to do this for those who are "dear" to us; and then He will do this for us perfectly, "by the word of His power." (Heb. i. 3).

—Rev. Edward Walker, D.C.L.

Christ's Miracles

"Jesus moved with compassion."—St Mark i. 41.

Teacher.—Ought we to believe in the truth of a teacher who works miracles? If so, why?

Pupil.—We ought; because miracles are supernatural, and show that a teacher is supernaturally helped.

Teacher.—What do you mean by miracles being supernatural? Suppose a teacher declares that God is an evil spirit, and, to prove this, causes a tree to be uprooted and to walk reversed upon its top; that would be supernatural, would it be a miracle?

Pupil.—I suppose it would; but I should not believe such a teacher.

Teacher.—No; you would not. You would say the miracle was either an imposture or, if supernatural, supernaturally bad, proving that the teacher was aided by an evil, not by a good being. Were there ever such cases? Is it worth while considering them?

Pupil.—I do not read of any but good miracles.

Teacher.—That is, because our translators use two different English words to express the same Greek word in the New Testament. Have you forgotten the meaning of the Greek word translated "miracle" in the Gospel of St John?

Pupil.—Sign.

Teacher.—And do we not read that false christs and prophets should arise, and "show great *signs* and wonders," insomuch that, if it were possible, they should "deceive the very elect"? It seems, then, that there are, or may be, bad miracles or sings, as well as good. How are we to distinguish the good from the bad?

Pupil.—I do not know.

Teacher.—I think we shall be helped if we use the word sign instead of miracle. A miracle means simply something wonderful. A sign is an imperfect term, suggesting the need of further definition. What further question does the word sign suggest?

Pupil.—It makes us ask, "A sign of what?"

Teacher.—Apply this to the case above mentioned—the uprooted tree moving on its top. What is that a sign of?

Pupil.—Power.

Teacher.—Then you may believe that the man who works such a sign is powerful, but you need believe no more. But does this represent the signs worked by our Lord? I do not say that there are not one or two that seem mere signs of power. But the majority of our Lord's signs, what were they, and of what were they signs?

Pupil.—They were works of healing; and they showed that He had power to heal supernaturally.

Teacher.—Our Lord once worked a miraculous cure, when a number of Pharisees were present. He prefaced the act by saying to them, "But that ye may know——" What was it that this act was to make the Pharisees know? Simply, that He had power to heal supernaturally?

Pupil.—No; that He had power on earth to forgive sins. "But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins."

Teacher.—What connection is there between sin and disease, forgiving and healing? Express it in a proportion.

Pupil.—As disease is to the body, so is sin to the soul; and as Jesus could supernaturally heal disease, so could He heal or forgive sin.

Teacher.—Exactly so. The Pharisees said Jesus had no right or power to forgive sins—only God could do that. Jesus replied that He could prove that He could do the invisible work of healing the soul, by doing the visible work of healing the body, and that by a mere word. The words, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," and "Arise, and walk," were easy. The deeds were difficult. He would prove that the first expression, which could not be tested, was more than mere words, by using the second expression, which could be tested, and by showing that it underwent the test. But did not the Pharisees say that He healed the distressed and the possessed by the help of Satan? In fact, did they not make the same objection to Christ's signs that we have made above to bad miracles? And how did Christ meet this objection?

Pupil.—He said that an evil spirit could not work deliverance from misery and evil, that all good actions must come from a good being—God.

Teacher.—This is in accordance with the books of the Old Testament. Health and prosperity are regarded as blessings bestowed by God on those who obey Him. Hence when Jesus worked a work of healing, that was a sign of what?

Pupil.—That the work and the Worker came from God.

Teacher.—But when a skilful physician cures a patient, despaired of by all his friends, is that a sign that the worker comes from God?

Pupil.—No.

Teacher.—I suppose it is a sign of intelligence and skill that comes from God. But if the physician feels no interest in his work or in his patient, and does it only for reputation or money, the worker cannot be said to come from God. St Matthew, describing the manner in which Jesus healed all that were possessed and diseased, considers the healing as the fulfilment of an ancient prophecy. Quote the prophecy.

Pupil.—"Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses."

Teacher.—Can you mention any case where a sign of healing was performed without a word from Jesus?

Pupil.—The woman who touched Him in the throng was healed at once.

Teacher.—And what did Jesus say to those who expostulated with Him for saying, while pressed on all sides by the crowd, "Who touched Me?"

Pupil.—"Somebody hath touched Me, for I perceive that virtue is gone out of Me."

Teacher.—Then what difference is there between the works of a physician and those of Jesus considered as *signs*? Of what are they respectively signs?

Pupil.—The former are signs of acquired skill and knowledge, the latter of innate power and sympathy. The physician does not bear the sicknesses of his patients, and, though he heals, may not sympathise at all. Christ is said to bear them, and to heal them by a power coming out of Himself, out of His own nature.

Teacher.—Why did Christ perform these signs?

Pupil.—To prove His mission from God.

Teacher.—But in many cases, as in that of Peter's mother-in-law, He worked signs among friends who were convinced of His truth; while, on the other hand, He refused to perform a sign for the Pharisees, though they were not convinced, and required a sign for conviction. Surely you cannot say that He healed the daughter of the Syrophœnician in order to convince her or anyone else of His power of truth? Again, take the first cure of a leper recorded by St Mark (i. 41). Jesus is there said to have emphatically en-

joined secrecy on the leper. But besides, a motive is there assigned for the act. What is it?

Pupil.—It is said that Jesus "*moved with compassion*, put forth His hand, and touched" the leper, and said, "Be thou clean." But if these acts of healing were signs of His loving power, must not Jesus have performed them to show His love and power?

Teacher.—Are not honest actions the signs of an honest man? Yet surely an honest man does not perform them *to show* that he is honest, but *because* he is honest. So Jesus healed men, not *to show* them that He loved them, but *because* He loved them and sympathised with them. We call His signs supernatural, and so they are, for they are above the powers of our ordinary nature; but to Jesus they were natural, the most natural expressions of His sympathy for suffering humanity. Hence, though St John calls the works of Christ "signs," the first three Evangelists simply use the term "mighty works." We lose a good deal if we suppose that Jesus simply cured the sick in order to convince bystanders of His own power. Indeed we know that where there was a good deal of incredulity, and where proof might have been supposed most needed, Jesus not only did not, but could not, work a sign. Read St Mark vi. 5.

Pupil.—"And *He could there do no mighty work,* save that He laid His hands upon a few sick (infirm) folk, and healed them." But surely Jesus could have done a mighty work if He had pleased?

Teacher.—Could Jesus do wrong? Could He turn stones into bread for His own pleasure? Could He cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple? Could He ask His Father to send twelve legions of angels to save Him from the Cross? In one sense He *could* do all these things; in another, and the most natural sense, He *could* not. And the original in St Mark is very definite: "He *was not able* to do any mighty work there." Why not? Answer from the context.

Pupil.—Because of the unbelief of the villagers. They took offence at His high profession because they knew Him from His childhood, and His family also, and they despised Him as the result of familiarity.

Teacher.—Mention any case where Jesus made the working of a sign contingent upon belief.

Pupil.—Before He healed the lunatic boy, He said to the boy's father, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."

Teacher.—It seems strange, does it not, that those who had faith already could obtain a sign from Jesus, while those who had no faith could not? In accordance with what spiritual law is this?

Pupil.—"Whosoever hath to him shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that he hath."

Teacher.—Most of our Lord's signs were works of healing. Can you show from the Old Testament that health was regarded as a blessing on faith and obedience towards God, and sickness as a punishment for disobedience?

Pupil.—In the Book of Deuteronomy (vii. 12-15) the people of Israel are thus addressed: "If ye hearken to these judgments . . . . thou shalt be blessed above all people, and the Lord will take away from thee all sickness."

Teacher.—Yes: Isaiah prophesied, and Jesus accepted, as a sign of the Kingdom, that the blind should see, the lame walk, the lepers be cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead be raised, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them. And do you remember any passage where our Lord speaks of illness as coming from Satan, who, as we saw above, is said to execute the wrath of God?

Pupil.—Seeing a woman in the synagogue who "had a spirit of infirmity

eighteen years, and was bowed together," Jesus released her from her infirmity by laying His hands upon her; and He described her as "a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years."

Teacher.—True: and note that in this case Jesus is not here said to have "cast out" any evil spirit; nor does this appear to have been regarded as a case of "possession." We must now touch lightly upon the cases where Jesus is said to have cast out evil spirits. I will simply give you my own opinion about it. I do not think it a matter of great importance, except that use has been made of it to throw discredit on the Gospel history.

Cases of "possession" were very common during the period of the Gospel history, not only in Palestine, but in other parts of the Roman Empire. They are not found in the early history of nations. The case of Saul is almost unique in the ancient times of Israel. Latterly, as men became less patriotic, simple and warlike, more self-introspective, melancholy and superstitious, lascivious and vicious, for want of occupation, "possession" became more common. It raged like an epidemic in Galilee and in provinces exposed to the influence of Grecian idolatry, and distant from the quieting solemnities of the Temple worship; but Judæa was comparatively free from it. Consequently St John, writing of Jerusalem, mentions no cases of possession; and though the three first Evangelists, as long as they speak of Galilee and the North, often allude to them, yet when Jesus journeys southward, all mention of them ceases. The mischief was so common as to give rise to various impostures. It became a lucrative profession to cast out devils. A Jewish exorcist is said by Josephus to have cast out an evil spirit in the presence of Vespasian and his sons. The spirit was extracted from the nostrils of the man possessed, and was forced by the exorcist to overthrow a bucket of water in his flight, as a proof of his expulsion. Such evident impostures have caused many to deny the reality of "possession." But though such expressions as "the devil went out," and others implying motion, may be figurative, yet at the present time there are cases where the shortest and most real *description* of the patient's state (no complete *explanation* perhaps is or will be possible in this world) is to say, "a man is not himself," "he is out of himself." By these words we imply that another self has "possesion" of the man. One patient imagines that his stomach is full of toads; another feels himself consumed by an inward fire; a third sees blood-red flames before his eyes; he hears loud roaring noises or thundering cannonades; sulphurous flames are in his nostrils; lifeless objects assume life to threaten him, and the pitying face of a friend becomes a grinning demon. The insane fit ceases sometimes, only to give way to convulsions, which in turn are succeeded by recurring insanity. Sometimes two different and discordant voices issue from the man, suggesting a struggle between two contending wills within him. In these unhappy men the intellect sometimes retains a partial and fitful life, but the moral affections are invariably destroyed. The shames and decencies of humanity are removed. A spirit indeed unclean takes possession of the man, and he freely indulges the instincts of the animal.

I think that Jesus would have treated such modern cases as cases of "possession"; and it seems to me to be the most accurate description of such men to say that they are "possessed" by an evil spirit. They deserve, and gained from Jesus, the most sincere sympathy. Often they are paying the penalties of their own sins, but sometimes of the sins of others. The drunkenness or vicious excesses of one generation are visited on the second or third, in the form of melancholy, mania, or imbecility. To those wretched beings, who seem to have crowded the streets of every village of Galilee, Jesus extended the same compassion that He did to "sinners." Sunk in almost bestial habits

(for habit, and not sin, seems the appropriate word where the will is destroyed), they were half-repelled and half-attracted by His voice proclaiming God the Father, and all men brothers, forgiveness for the past, light and life for the future, and, above all, God seeking the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and caring more for the one lost than the ninety-nine that were safe in the fold. Their lower self, the evil spirit in them, cried out to be left alone, their human self implored help: in this distraction they often burst out in the synagogue, interrupting Jesus. Then came the voice of the Healer: "Hold thy peace, and come out of him"; and with a loud cry, sometimes accompanied by convulsions, the man was healed. So much about "possession," and the healing of the "possessed" and the sick. Did the disciples of Jesus ever fail in an attempt to work a miraculous cure?

Pupil.—Yes; they could not cure the lunatic because of their unbelief.

Teacher.—Unbelief in what?

Pupil.—In their power to heal miraculously.

Teacher.—Then if a child, or if an uneducated ignorant man, supposed himself able to heal disease, felt quite certain of it, he could do it?

Pupil.—No.

Teacher.—Why not?

Pupil.—His faith would be false faith, founded on ignorance.

Teacher.—Then the true faith, by which the disciples cured the sick, was founded on knowledge—knowledge of what?

Pupil.—Knowledge of Jesus and of His power, and of their participation in His power, and knowledge that it was the will of God that the sick should be healed.

Teacher.—Bear this in mind for what follows. These signs of healing, as you are probably aware, did not at once become extinct among the followers of Christ. There is considerable evidence to show that in some degree they continued even after the Apostolic period. Now, however, most of us believe they are extinct. All would admit that they are rare. What is the reason for this? Is it not now, as much as then, the will of God that the sick should be healed?

Pupil.—Perhaps it is because of our unbelief.

Teacher.—Perhaps it is, in part. But are not the blind, the lame, and the dumb, now, in modern times, healed to an extent unparalleled in ancient times?

Pupil.—Yes, but that is by natural means.

Teacher.—True, but every time that God reveals to us some new scientific method of preventing or curing disease, He thereby indicates that it is His will that disease shall be thus prevented or cured; and we become less and less inclined to attempt a cure by any other means. It is quite conceivable that the knowledge of God's will, which we are daily deriving from the growth of scientific knowledge, may have the same special fitness for our times that the "signs" or "mighty works" of healing had for the early Christian period. Science has, in the same way, influenced the objects for which we feel justified in praying. We do not pray that a child may not catch the smallpox when we have vaccination. This point, however, can be more suitably discussed when we come to the subject of prayer. Are all the signs of Jesus works of healing?

Pupil.—No. There is the destruction of the fig-tree, the coin in the fish's mouth, and the destruction of the swine.

Teacher.—I am not prepared to discuss these miracles in detail with you. All I will say is, that since the general purpose of our Lord's mighty works is clearly beneficent, we need not allow our faith to be shaken by a few ex-

ceptions liable, perhaps, to misunderstanding, or capable of various explanations. Jesus was asked repeatedly by the Pharisees for a sign. What sort of a sign?

Pupil.—A sign from Heaven.

Teacher.—Yes, they seem to have thought that an imposter could work signs on earth, but not in Heaven. They were prepared to believe Jesus if He would have stopped the sun, or caused some fiery apparition in the sky. Why did not Jesus give this sign?

Pupil.—Because, as you said above, they had not faith.

Teacher.—But He cured the palsied man in part, at all events, to convince the sceptical Scribes that He had power on earth to forgive sins. If He cured the palsy, why not stop the sun?

Pupil.—I suppose He felt the cure was a natural sign. Stopping the sun, for no reason, would have been unnatural.

Teacher.—Of what was the cure a natural, and the other (stopping the sun) an unnatural sign?

Pupil.—Of His love and power.

Teacher.—But the reign or Kingdom of all-powerful love, which Christ introduced, was called by a certain title. What was it?

Pupil.—The Kingdom of God.

Teacher.—Then signs of the Kingdom must be appropriate to the Kingdom. When the disciples wished to call down fire on their enemies, He did not say it could not be done; but "Ye know not of what spirit ye are." It would have been unnatural; so when He was asked to give a sign from Heaven He refused, for the same reason that He would not say He was the Messiah. And what was that reason?

Pupil.—Because saying would not have been revealing: because He wished men to believe in Him for Himself; and if He had said He was the Messiah, and the Pharisees had believed in Him, they would have been believing in the Messiah, but not loving Jesus of Nazareth.

Teacher.—For the same reason, if He had stopped the sun, the Pharisees would have believed in Him. But how? As an omnipotent worker of wonders. Jesus did not want that belief; He wanted to be trusted in as the Healer, the Forgiver of Sin, the Saviour of the lost. Stopping the sun would not have been a natural sign that He could and would forgive sin. In the circumstances in which He stood, it would have been a *wonder*, not a *sign*. There are three words used in the New Testament for works of this kind—"sign," "mighty work," and "wonder." The distinction in some of the later books is not always maintained, but in the Gospel our Lord's works are called "signs" and "mighty works," but never "wonders."

Before we close the lesson, let me put before you the usual objection to Christ's miracles, which must present itself to you sooner or later. It is said that they are against the laws of Nature, and that the more we study Nature, the more invariable her laws appear. What would you say to this?

Pupil.—May not God, Who made the laws of Nature, also reverse them?

Teacher.—But when a man lays down rules and afterwards breaks them, we seem to see want of forethought and wisdom. Besides, have we not admitted that Christ's miracles themselves proceeded on certain laws? In certain contingencies "He could do no mighty work."

Pupil.—Then are we to say that God's laws come into collision with one another?

Teacher.—What is the law of gravitation?

Pupil.—That every particle of matter attracts every other.

Teacher.—And therefore that the earth attracts all bodies to itself. This

feather, as you know, placed in an exhausted receiver will immediately fall to the ground. It will fall by a law of Nature. But now let in the air, and the feather, instead of falling, hovers. Again, it hovers by a law of Nature. Now waft it towards the fire: it is caught in the draught of the chimney and hurries up in the current. Once more, we may say it ascends by a law of Nature. Ascent is as natural now as descent was then. Just so with the works of Christ. They are unnatural for us, they are natural for Him. Faint traces of the health-giving influence of trust and hope upon the human frame, exerted by human beings on one another, are recognised even now, particularly in the treatment of nervous diseases. Faint as they are, they are sufficient, in my opinion, to prove that the healing power of Christ was based on the same spiritual law which we find in them. If it were possible for a second Jesus of Nazareth to appear on earth, as successful in dissipating the suspicions and winning the trust and faith of sinners, He too, I doubt not, would have the same power of healing the body through the spirit.

The works of Christ, it is true, were not all works of healing. The destruction of the swine, the attraction of the fish to the nets of Peter and his companions, the blasting of the fig-tree, the discovery of the coin in the fish's mouth, and the miraculous increase of food as well as the change of water into wine, and perhaps the sudden healing of the ear of Malchus, are works that rest on a different footing. Some of them are attended with great difficulty. All should be examined with due reference to the context and to the evidence on which they severally depend. Even those who reject this or that miracle on critical or other grounds—as for example, because it is only contained in one of the Gospels, and shows signs of interpolation—are not bound to reject the great body of our Lord's miracles. Others, who accept the miracles without exception, may fairly argue thus: "We admit the difficulty in this or that miracle which you assail, we certainly cannot in this case trace a law, or any appearance of a law; but we view it in connection with Christ's other miracles, which do contain traces of a law, and hence we infer that there is a law in this case also, which, though at present concealed from us, may hereafter be revealed by science or by other means. The general tendency of order and law in the works of Christ is so strong, that we do not think that one or two isolated cases of difficulty ought in themselves to prevent us from believing that all, without exception, partake in the general tendency. We would sooner suppose that the account of any particular miracle was based on some misunderstanding, than that it was against this tendency, but at present we do not see sufficient reason for such a supposition." Miracles like these may come like certain comets, once in a hundred or even in a thousand years; they may come but once only in the history of the world, and that once, when Christ comes; but, for all that, they are according to law, just as the seemingly irregular comet obeys the same laws as govern the planets and the stars.

A law of Nature, so far as it is absolutely true, relates to the past: when it relates to the future it is a probability. Though expressed in the present tense, and implying the future (as, for instance, "every particle of matter attracts every other," really means "is attracting and will attract,") it is really only a compendious record of the past, with an implied inference, derived from the *likeness* of sequences of phenomena in the world, that it is *likely* (and often extremely *likely* or, as we are in the habit of saying, *certain*) that the past is now being, and will be, repeated. There is therefore no necessity or inevitability in a law of Nature, except that which springs from a feeling that God reveals His will to us in an orderly manner, and does not break His order. The existence of humanity depends upon the preservation of the

order, and therefore we believe the order will be preserved. If the sun rose one day and not another, if water and air and earth changed their specific gravities, if the law of gravitation were suspended, men would cease to exist. A belief in order is therefore inherent in those who believe in God as a Father of men. But how is this belief incompatible with the belief that the central figure of humanity, the Son of God, coming into the world for an express purpose, performed works specially adapted to that purpose? Though there may be some misunderstandings in the accounts of some of these works, yet surely the great bulk of them are such that we should at once say, that for a Son of God they are *natural*. Of course if a law, as it generally does, implies repetition, induction from several instances, there is a contradiction of terms in saying that Christ's works are according to law. His works cannot be repeated, unless Christ Himself is repeated. But if law means the will of God, tending to the development of material and spiritual order, free from caprice and change, working on lines that have been immovable since the creation, then in that sense of the word the miracles of Christ are according to law, for they were "prepared by the Father before the foundation of the world."—*Rev. E. A. Abbott, M.A.*

Critical Notes on the Gospel

A Leper.—Leprosy is a disease of the skin which was prevalent in the East at this time, and still survives in many countries. Its beginning was so insignificant as to be hardly noticed, but it gradually spread until the whole body was affected. The extremities dropped off in its last stages. Its victims were isolated from society and so deprived of all means of livelihood. Leprosy was regarded as one of God's special judgments on great transgressions.

And Jesus . . . . Touched Him.—An expression of sympathy specially gratifying to the leper, who had not known the touch of loved ones at least for many months, perhaps years. Jesus touched him, though to do so rendered Him in the eyes of the law ceremonially unclean. "To touch without contagion was part of the miracle."

See Thou Tell No Man.—Jesus wished to avoid mere curiosity in Himself as a miracle-worker. What He feared actually took place, He was hindered and embarrassed by the multitude which thronged around Him.

Shew Thyself to the Priest.—Special mercies do not exempt from common duties." It was for "a testimony unto them," i.e. to show the priests the nature of His ministry and to assure them that He came to fulfil the law, This direction was also calculated to conciliate the priests.

A Centurion.—An officer in charge of a century, a company normally consisting of a hundred men, the sixtieth part of a legion.

My Servant.—The word used, though meaning "slave," is an affectionate one; lit., "my boy."

I Will Come and Heal Him.—Jesus rarely expressed His intention of healing before doing so, as in this case. Note Christ's confidence in His own power.

The Centurion Answered, etc.—Luke's account is slightly different. According to Luke the centurion asked the elders to plead his case and then sent friends to say: "Lord, trouble not thyself." Note that the elders said "he is worthy that Thou shouldest do this for him," but the centurion himself said: "I am not worthy."

Only Say the Word.—"He believed that Christ could bring supernatural forces into play as easily as he himself could control the movements of his subordinates" (v. 9).

He Marvelled.—Jesus really wondered at, or admired, the man's faith. It was surprising that while so many were sceptical about the gifts of the Healer, an outsider should so fully appreciate them.

"The last in opportunity are often the first in attainment."

Many Shall come from the East and West.—A prophecy which has been already richly fulfilled in the ingathering of us Gentiles into the Kingdom.

"According to the most popular Jewish conception, Heaven was a great banquet, where the favoured race should meet with ancestral saints, but the Gentiles should not be admitted. Jesus opposed this doctrine. The judgment would be taken on moral grounds." Matt. vii. 19.

Anecdotes and Illustrations

Faith.—What is Faith? It is the Christian's principle of life, for it is written, "The just shall live by faith." It is the fixed unswerving root of the tree of righteousness, the planting of the Lord. It is the eye of the soul by which it sees Him Who is invisible. Where Faith dwells in the heart the Bible is no mere history of the past, the Heavenly world no imagination of the future, but they are ever present realities, more real and present to the soul than is the world of sense. Thus the centurion in to-day's Gospel saw in the Lord Jesus, not the Carpenter's Son of Nazareth, but the Divine Master of a host of servants ever ready to do His bidding. And what are the fruits of Faith? They are deeds done for God, not man, with Heaven, not earth, in view. At the close of the Epistle to the Hebrews we read the glorious recital of deeds so performed by the champions of the Jewish Church, but time failed the inspired writer, and he spoke but little of the martyrs of her latter days, of those who were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might attain a better resurrection; and of others who had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment. Yet it has ever been believed that his words do apply to those Jewish heroes who suffered in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, the impious King of Syria; and Faith being the watchword of to-day we cannot do better than give a somewhat longer account of those who, through Faith, obtained so good a report. It is taken from the Second Book of Maccabees, an apocryphal book, which though we may not quote for the establishment of doctrine, yet we are to read for example of life and instruction. The Old Testament History leaves the Jews subject to the King of Persia, the second of the five empires of the world. When Alexander the Great (the conquering leopard of Dan. vii. 6) overthrew the Persian, and set up the Grecian, or third empire, Judæa passed into his hands, and after his death it belonged by turns to the kings of Egypt and Syria. The Jews suffered a good deal at this time, for Egypt and Syria were often at war, and the Holy Land, lying between them was their battle-field. Still their religion and laws were commonly respected till the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, King of Syria, the greatest persecutor of ancient times. From hatred to the truth he deliberately set himself to uproot the Jewish faith. He began by selling the high priesthood for money to two traitor Jews successively, and employing them to bring in heathen ways. Next, with their help, he broke into the Temple and carried away all its treasures, the altar of incense, the golden table of shewbread, and candlesticks, censers, holy vessels, and everything else of gold. Then he plundered and massacred the helpless people, threw down the city walls, defiled the Temple, burned the book of the law, and set up a statue of Jupiter on the very altar of burnt offering.

Pagan statues and altars were also set up in every town of Judæa, and the Jews were ordered to sacrifice to them under pain of death. Death was also threatened to any who observed the Sabbath, or the rite of circumcision, or any part of Moses' law. Some of the people fell away through fear and weakness, but there were many who witnessed a good confession. Two women, for circumcising their children, were led through the streets with the infants hung about their necks, and then thrown headlong from the city walls. An aged Scribe too, named Eleazar, withstood every attempt to seduce or terrify him, and at last was scourged to death while praying aloud to God. Many others suffered in like manner, but it is of a family of seven brothers that we are going particularly to speak. Antiochus himself was presiding at the judgment seat when they were brought before it with their mother. They were scourged and ordered to eat swine's flesh, which was contrary to God's command to the Jews. But the eldest brother, speaking in the name of the rest, said, "We are ready to die, rather than to transgress the laws of our fathers." The king therefore had the instruments of torture made ready, and the pans and brazen cauldrons heated; but the seven stood undaunted. The eldest was seized and so maimed and burned that it was a marvel he yet lived; but he bore all patiently, and his brothers comforted him, saying, "The Lord God looketh upon us." When he died, the second was brought forward, and the skin having been torn from his face and head they asked him whether he would eat of the king's meat. He refused, and they tormented him to death in the sight of the king, to whom he said with his last breath, "Thou, like a fury, takest us out of this present life, but the King of the World, for Whose laws we suffer, shall raise us up unto everlasting life." The third brother being seized stretched forth his limbs cheerfully to those who were waiting to lop them off, saying, "These I had from Heaven, and for God's laws I despise them, and from Him I hope to receive them again." The king marvelled at his courage, and tortured him to death without delay, and his next brother immediately after him. This last sufferer said with his dying breath, "It is good when put to death by men to look for hope of resurrection from God." The fifth and sixth brothers were butchered in like manner, their mother standing by and encouraging them with thoughts of God, and His great power and goodness. Their faith did not fail them. "Think not," they said to Antiochus, "that our nation is forsaken of God, but abide a while, and behold His great power, how He will torment thee and thy seed. We suffer these things, having sinned against God, but think not thou that takest in hand to strive against Him, to remain unpunished." Only the seventh brother was now left; there was a pause in the cruel butchery, and the tyrant changed his course of action. Calling the boy to his side, he caressed him and made him many fair promises, if only he would yield to his will and give up his strictness; but all was to no purpose. So he sent for the mother, and condoled with her on her loss, saying it rested with her to keep her last child for herself; she must advise him what to do. "I will give him good counsel," she said: and she did so, though other than Antiochus looked for. Going up to the boy, she entreated him by all the love and care she had shown him not to afflict her by cowardice or want of faith. "Fear not this tormentor," she said, "but, being worthy of thy brethren, accept thy death, that I may receive thee again through mercy with thy brethren." While she was yet speaking, he turned to the tormentors and said, "Whom wait ye for? I will not obey the king's commandment, but the law which was given to our fathers by Moses." Full of wrath, the king heaped on him torments greater if possible than those of his brethren, but he died, we are told,

undefiled, and put his whole trust in the Lord. And last of all the mother too, was slain, 164 B.C. If such were the victories of faith ere Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith was born into the world, if Jewish worthies could so endure, as seeing Him Who is invisible, surely we for whom Christ died, we who know in Whom we have believed, should be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, and, taking the shield of faith, should quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

CHRIST STILL HEALS THE SICK.—Dr Horton relates the following: "One Sunday morning a message came to me before the service from an agonised mother: 'Pray for my child; the doctor has been, and gives no hope.' We prayed, the Church prayed, with the faith in a present Christ mighty to save. Next day I learned that the doctor who had given the message of despair in the morning had returned after the service, and said at once: 'A remarkable change has taken place.' The child recovered, and still lives."

CHRIST'S TOUCH.—Turner, the artist, was in Devonshire, and sketched a bridge over the Tamar and the beautiful scenery bordering the river. The sketch presented only the dim grey of hastily-pencilled lines, but when he got to work with brush and pigments it became a marvel of splendid colours. So the hand of our Master Painter transformed many a darkened life into one radiant with the loveliness of heartfelt gratitude.

LEPROSY.—The Eastern leprosy was a distemper of the most loathsome kind, highly contagious, so as to infect garments and houses; and was deemed incurable by human means. Among the Jews God alone was applied to for its removal; and the cure was ever attributed to His sovereign power. It is also allowed by the Jewish rabbis that the curing of lepers would be one of the characteristics of the Messiah. We must also note that, by the law of Moses, all leprous persons were to be brought to the priest, who, after due examination (according to rules given in Lev. xiii., xiv.), was to declare and pronounce them unclean; and such declaration shut them out of all civil society, into which they could not be restored till after a like examination by the priest, and a declaration that the leper was cleansed, and had offered his gift according to the law.

FAITH.—The centurion learned (his faith) through his own profession. "I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me." The argument ran thus: "I by the command of will, obtain the obedience of my dependents; Thou by will the obedience of Thine; sickness and health are Thy servants." Evidently he looked upon this universe with a soldier's eye; he could not look otherwise. To him this world was a mighty camp of living forces in which Authority was paramount. Trained in obedience to military law, accustomed to render prompt submission to those above him, and to extract it from those below him, he read Law everywhere; and Law to him meant nothing, unless it meant the expression of a personal will. It was this training through which Faith took its *form.—F. W. Robertson.*

THE ROMAN CENTURION.—A centurion was a Roman military officer, in command of a hundred foot soldiers—whence his name. His principal distinctive marks consisted in a helmet, more ornamented than those of the common soldiers, and in a rod or *bâton*, which he usually carried, and with which he summarily chastised those of his soldiers who neglected their duty, or were guilty of slight breaches of discipline. The power with which this officer was invested over his men explains what the centurion now before us says. He fixed the sentinels at their posts, and went the rounds to see that they were attentive to their duty; he distributed to the men their recompenses, and also inflicted punishments; and when the army was in order of

battle the centurions took their places at the head of their several troops. The pay of a centurion was, however, in the time of Polybius, only double that of a common soldier; but he probably had other sources of income, which compensated for the lowness of his pay. The centurions were usually men promoted from the ranks for merit and distinguished actions; but in a later day we find Vegetius complaining that the emperors and generals often appointed to this office persons who had never served in the armies. These details may be of the more interest when we recollect that the first heathen convert was a Roman centurion.

Questions on the Gospel

1. When Jesus had come down from the mountain, who met Him? 2. What did the leper do? 3. What did he say? 4. What did Jesus do? 5. What did He say? 6. What did Jesus tell the man not to do? 7. What did He tell him to do? 8. Where did Jesus go next? 9. Who met him? 10. What was the matter? 11. What did Jesus offer to do? 12. What did the centurion say to that? 13. What did Jesus say about the centurion's faith? 14. What did He say to the centurion?

Books of Reference

"Cambridge Bible"; "Century Bible"; "Expositor's Bible"; *Trench* on "Miracles"; *Bruce's* "Miraculous Element in the Gospels"; "The Biblical Illustrator"; *Hasting's* "Dictionary of the Bible" for Articles on "Miracles," "Capernaum," "Centurion," etc.

The Epistle

ROMANS XII. 16-21.

Overcoming Evil

"*Overcome evil with good.*"—*Rom. xii.* 21.

I. OVERCOME.—You have seen soldiers about the streets—perhaps have seen them march through the town in large numbers. What are soldiers kept for? What do they call the people against whom they fight? When a great many soldiers go out and fight, we say there is a *battle*. A battle is a very dreadful thing. Hundreds of men are trying to kill one another. Do you think God meant you to do this? No, he intended them to live in love and peace. He sent Jesus Christ to teach men how to live—Jesus Christ did not tell them to fight—He told them to be kind, and to do good to each other, to bear with and forgive one another. But we were talking about a battle. The soldiers are on one side, their enemies on the other. Those who are strongest and fight best generally win the battle—perhaps drive their enemies away, or make them ask for peace. If they can do this we say they have *overcome* their enemies—that is, put them down—gained the victory over them. (Repeat the application of this or other illustrations till children understand the meaning of the word *overcome*.)

II. EVIL.—WRONG. 1. Wrongdoing.—Wicked people sometimes will try to do others harm. Some naughty children like to hurt their schoolfellows. Now, though it is right to try to keep others from doing us harm, and to

prevent our being hurt, we must not do evil in return for evil. (Illust.: If one boy strikes another, the boy who has been struck would do right to tell his parents or teacher or someone who could prevent his being hurt in future, but he would do wrong to fight in return.) 2. Wrong-speaking.—People do this oftener than the first. They often say things to us and about us that are not kind or that are not true. But should we speak unkindly to them, or say things not true about them in return? Will that make them leave off? What will it do? But, then, we *want* to make them leave off saying and doing wrong—we want to put down the evil—(require the word *overcome* given before).

III. We want to *overcome the evil.* But we shall not overcome like the soldiers do, by fighting; we shall not overcome by being angry or unkind. How then? (Repeat text.) By doing *good* to those who do us harm, or who wish to do us harm—by being kind to those who are unkind to us—by saying all the good we can (that is true) of those who say wicked and untrue things of us, and by *praying for them all.*

IV. WHY?—We often want to do just the contrary to all this—to "serve others as they serve us"—to give "tit for tat." Why then should we do what is so much harder—forgive, pity, and be kind to those who wrong us? 1. The text and many texts in the Bible plainly *tell* us to do it. 2. It is the surest way to make others leave off doing evil—they will get ashamed of injuring one who is kind to them. 3. It will make us more like Jesus Christ, Who never did an unkind action, or said an unkind word, even when His enemies were so cruel. He prayed for them even when they were nailing Him to the Cross. 4. We shall feel all the happier ourselves, for others will love us more, and in the end be kind to us; and we shall be happy in feeling God is pleased with us.

Man's Ways with Man

"Recompense to no man evil for evil."—Rom. xii. 17.

Illustrate the three ways in which man may act towards man.

I. THE DEVIL'S WAY.—Render evil for good.

II. MAN'S WAY.—Render evil for evil, good for good.

III. GOD'S WAY.—Render good for evil. Impress by aid of the following anecdote. During the revolutionary war lived Peter Miller, the leading member of a humble community located in the State of Pennsylvania. In this community lived a man who distinguished himself for very base conduct towards the Society to which Mr Miller belonged, and treason to his country. On the latter charge he was sentenced to death. No sooner was the sentence pronounced than Peter Miller set out on foot to visit General Washington, at Philadelphia, to intercede for the man's life. But he was told his prayer could not be granted "for his unfortunate friend." "My friend," exclaimed Miller, "I have not a worse enemy living than that same man." "What," rejoined Washington, "you have walked sixty miles to save the life of your enemy? That, in my judgment, puts the matter in a different light. I will grant you his pardon." The pardon was made out, and, without losing a moment's delay, Miller proceeded on foot to a place fifteen miles distant, where the execution was to take place on the afternoon of the same day. He arrived just as the man was being conducted to the scaffold, who, seeing Miller in the crowd, remarked, "There is old Peter Miller; he has walked all the way from Ephrata to have his revenge gratified to-day by seeing me hung." These words had scarcely been spoken, when he was made acquainted with the very different nature of Miller's visit, and that his life was spared.

Coals of Fire

"If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head."—Rom xii. 20

Forgiveness of enemies! Yes, that is the great lesson to be learnt from these verses—a wonderful lesson—a lesson taught only by the loving, forgiving Lord of earth and Heaven. The heathen nations knew nothing of it; they gloried in revenge and hatred; and the proud hearts of the Jews of old taught them to say, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemies" (Matt. v. 43). But both the Old and New Testament, being written by inspiration of God, tell us not only to love our relations, neighbours, friends, benefactors, but our enemies also (Matt. v. 44-48; Luke vi. 32-36).

What is an enemy? People may have different kinds of enemies; may they not? We may be ill-treated by words as well as by deeds; we may beget enemies by doing what is right (Luke vi. 22; Matt. x. 25, 35, 36), as well as by doing what is wrong (1 Pet. ii. 19, 20; iii. 16, 17). But the text tells us that if our enemy is hungry we must give him to eat, and if thirsty we must give him to drink. Many other parts of the Bible say the same thing. "Love your enemies" are our Saviour's own words. And He bids us copy the example of our Heavenly Father (Matt. v. 45), and tells us to be merciful as He is merciful, and kind to the unthankful and evil (Luke vi. 35, 36). "Good for evil," not "evil for evil," is to be the rule of conduct of God's people. How strong are Solomon's words in Prov. xxiv. 17, 29! "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth." "Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me."

We read of many of God's servants in the Bible who had this forgiving spirit. There was Joseph, who spoke and acted so tenderly, so forgivingly to his cruel, terrified brethren (Gen. xlv. 3-15; xlvii. 11; l. 15-21). There was Moses, who cried unto the Lord to heal Miriam (Num. xii. 1; ii. 10-13), and who was always praying for the ungrateful children of Israel. There was David, who spared the life of his bitter enemy Saul (1 Sam. xxiii. 14, 15; xxiv. 1-19), and who spoke good instead of evil of him after his death (2 Sam. i. 23, 24; ii. 4-7; xvi. 5-13; xix. 16-23; Ps. vii. 4-5); there was Elisha also, who, on one occasion, spoke almost the very words of our text (2 Kings vi. 22). God grant that by His grace we may be followers of those who have thus acted; and may He help us to learn of Him Who was meek and lowly (Matt. xi. 29), and Who has left us an example that we should follow His steps; Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again (1 Pet. ii. 21-24); Who prayed for His enemies (Luke xxiii. 34), wept over Jerusalem (Luke xix. 41), and commanded His blessed Gospel to be first preached among His murderers (Luke xxiv. 47).

Stephen, His first martyr, had drunk in of His spirit when, in the midst of a furious crowd, and among falling stones, he cried, "Lord lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts vii. 60). And he who stood holding the clothes of the principal actors in that murderous scene not only learnt in after days to call Jesus Lord (Acts xxii. 19, 20), but also to say of the friends who forsook him in his deepest need, "I pray God that it be not laid to their charge" (2 Tim. iv. 16; 1 Cor. iv. 12, 13). Paul desireth, too, that others should follow him as he followed Christ (1 Cor. xi. 1; 2 Cor. x. 1). In Rom. xii. 14-21; Eph. iv. 32; Col. iii. 13; Philem. 10, there is much said about love and forgiveness.

I heard once of a charge which a good man gave his sons about a person who had injured and ill-treated him. What was it, do you think? It was, "Never think or speak evil of him for what he has done to me; but, whenever you pass his house, lift up your hearts in prayer to God for him and his family." Had not that man some of "the mind of Christ"? Surely those who have had much forgiven, should love much and forgive much. Unforgiving, revengeful spirits are but the outward marks of unchanged hearts. How can such join in the Lord's Prayer? How can they say, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us"?

How sad it is to see the quarrels that are carried on from month to month, from year to year, in most towns and villages! How different from "heaping coals of fire"—from returning good for evil! How many hearts might be won by kindness, how many enemies might be turned into friends, how much misery might be averted if the text I have read to you were more thought of! But we cannot do anything right in our own strength (John xv. 5; 2 Cor. xii. 9; Phil. iv. 13). Let us pray God the Holy Spirit to teach every heart amongst us our own sinfulness and need of forgiveness from Him Who forgiveth iniquity, transgression, and sin (Ps. ciii. 3, 10-12; Isa. i. 18; Mic. vii. 18), that we may learn from Him to forgive others as He has forgiven us (Col. iii. 13), and obtain the reward (Prov. xxv. 22; Luke vi. 35). He has promised to the children of the Highest.

Persecution for Righteousness' Sake

"*Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*"—*Rom. xii.* 21.

The words of our text are very familiar to us; but very few of us, probably, have ever attempted to understand clearly their full meaning. The concluding verses of this chapter are on the subject of anger, and provocation to wrath. "If it be posssible," says the Apostle, in the eighteenth verse, "as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." At all events, on your side let there be peace, even if on the other there is not. Do not, however much provocation there may be to anger, allow yourself to increase the evil by your own conduct; but rather, as far as you can, pursue peace with all men. And, even in a more extreme case, when some real injury has been done you, the same rule is to be observed. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay,' said the Lord." Even here the Christian spirit will be shown by yielding to wrath rather than opposing it. Rather remove out of the way, and let his anger have space to work freely and spend itself; and do not make it more by opposing or punishing it. "Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." This is, so to speak, the only revenge which we are to take for injuries. We are to make our enemy ashamed and sorry, not by requiting evil for evil, but by showing him undeserved kindness. In this way we are to heap coals of fire on his head; we are to take the truest and the most effectual vengeance which is possible to us; as effectual as if we were to pursue our wrong with the extremest revenge, even to the point of burning our enemy at the stake. In a word, the Apostle concludes: "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." Do not let your Christian principle be overcome by the bad example and provocation of others; do not be induced to imitate it; but rather let your Christian kindness overbear and subdue their malice, and thus gain the best of all victories, that which is gained by long-suffering and peace, whose trophies are not of this world, but of Heaven.

This is the general sense of the passage which we are considering. Patience, and forgiveness, and retaliation, not of evil, but of good: these are the general lessons which the Apostle impresses on his Christian converts here: lessons applicable, of course, not then only, but at all times; not only to the Christians at Rome, but to all of us too; to everyone at all times, and to ourselves most of all.

For we must not forget that we are more exposed perhaps to the sins against which the Apostle warns all men, during our school days, than we may ever afterwards be. When St Paul wrote these words he was thinking most probably of great persecutions and afflictions; of the constant war that was being carried on by the heathen world at Rome against the few poor and despised Christians in the midst of the imperial city. They were many of them Jews, a race held in particular dislike and contempt at Rome; and those who were Romans were confused by the heathens with the rest, so that all together were held as mean and contemptible, worthy only of scorn and persecution. We are so accustomed to see Christianity honoured and worshipped, and respected even by worldly men, that we can hardly place ourselves in the position of the Apostle and the early Christians, and understand how mean and miserable a class of men the first Christians must have appeared to the haughty, luxurious, and cultivated citizen of the chief city of the world. And so there must have been a constant strife at work, or, at all events, a constant spirit of dislike and opposition, ready to break out into a flame at the slightest provocation: the Romans, on the one hand, hating and despising the Christians as a mean race, grovelling in the superstitions of the East; the Christians inclined to resent the contempt of the Romans by any conduct that could annoy their persecutors, by refusing marks of honour to the magistrates, or by disputing the payment of taxes; faults against which, as we know, St Paul goes on, in the next chapter of his Epistle, expressly to warn them. Take these things into consideration, and you will understand more easily why the Apostle lays so much stress as he does here upon a spirit of peace and of forgiveness. The same spirit of opposition, which was exhibited in the disputes and divisions amongst themselves on the subject of meats and days, showed itself towards their Roman neighbours in constant quarrels; or, at all events, in a feeling of ill-will, which was quite as serious a breach of the spirit of Christians.

But we should, as I have already said, see very little in the passage if this were all that we could find there; merely a notice of the relations of Christians and Romans in the time of the Apostle—a piece of old history. The value of this history is, that what was then is still in existence: that the same human weakness leads us to exactly the same faults, though in very different circumstances.

One of the commonest faults in a school is that of persecution. Every boy who comes to school is more or less exposed to it, and, probably, the more he attempts to do his duty and to excel in his studies, the more he will suffer from it. Now here is exactly a case where the Apostle's rule applies: "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." Every one of you acknowledges at once, when he witnesses or hears of a case of tyranny, that it is entirely wrong; that it is, in fact, the great evil of a school. Think for a moment what is implied by this. We say, and we say most truly, that this is what really distinguishes a good school and a good set of boys from a bad; that the great test is the prevalence or absence of these sins of tyranny and persecution; for there is nothing which more entirely poisons and ruins the moral character of a school. If persecution of the good, of the weak, and of the industrious, is once allowed to prevail; if there are not found among

the stronger and the older boys those who will check this vice, then we have at once a system of cowardice and meanness substituted for honesty and manliness; and when our tone is once cowardly, we may be sure that other vices will step in very soon; that those who are afraid to check tyranny will soon be afraid to resist the more subtle and still more poisonous sins; that when once the atmosphere of the school has become slavish and stagnant, as it were, then there will soon be found every form of evil. Here, then, we see one very plain and familiar use of the Apostle's words, "Be not overcome of evil." Do not be led away by the evil about you ever to join in it and encourage it, when your plain duty is to resist. How often will those, who do not actively persecute or injure others themselves, either passively allow very much which they ought to prevent, or openly encourage in others what they would perhaps be ashamed to do themselves. This is to be "overcome of evil"; to be carried away by bad example, or fear of offending others; and to be thus made the slaves and captives of sin, instead of its conquerors. And this is why this particular fault is such a good test of the general character of a school; for if you are afraid to oppose this fault, from the indulgence of which no pleasure can possibly be derived, how will you be able to withstand when you are tempted to do what is not only wrong but pleasant too, as many sins are? Remember then these words, "Be not overcome of evil." Never allow yourselves to be conquered and led into sin by the example of others; and begin with that sin which is so common among boys, that of persecution. Try and put down this sin whenever you see it. Do not be content with not joining in it, but try your best to check and stop it. If some few even would do this, we should soon find a much better spirit throughout; more courage, more resolution to do what is right, without fear of others, and more fear of sin, and of him whom our Lord commands us to fear, of our great enemy the devil, who by his temptations is able to cast both our soul and body into hell.

Again, there are others to whom these words give a most valuable lesson; those who have at any time suffered from evil. It is a hard and strange position for a boy, if he comes to a school and finds himself persecuted for the very things which he has always been taught to consider his great duty. You know how easy it is to put a stumbling-block in your brother's way by encouraging him to evil, and by jesting at his good resolutions and scruples; and so too *here* we may cause him to offend—namely, by persecuting, or joining others to persecute, a schoolfellow for his industry or for his conscientiousness. This was the first sin which came into the world after our first parents fell, and opened the door for sin, Cain's jealousy of his brother's goodness. A hard lesson for a boy, I say, to learn, when he finds the very things that should have been for his good turned into an occasion of stumbling. And he may fall in two ways. He may be frightened out of what is good, and purchase a truce, as it were, by following the example of others. If he does this, and thus gives up his better principles, then he is lost at once. He falls immediately from his better state, and loses at once and for ever all his opportunities of doing good to others by showing them an example of what is right. Let not anyone forget this. When tempted to sin, and when almost driven to it by the opposition of others and by their unkindness, let him remember that he may overlive this, and hold his own way, but he can never outlive the mischief that he will do both to himself and others by giving up what he knows to be his duty because of the fear of others. Or you may, perhaps, resist persecution; particularly if your age and strength enable you to do it. Then your danger is, that you will be provoked into some evil display of temper, or at least that you will

cherish bad feelings against those who have been against you. This again will be to be "overcome of evil": to make a serious fall; to undo by this uncharity much of the good which your perseverance in duty may have done. You may have conquered; but it has been with the armour of Saul, and not, as David did, with the weapons of God's choosing; and your victory will have had but a poor result if you yield to one foe while you resist another. Whenever, then, you feel tempted to sin by the indulgence of your temper, remember that the Apostle says not only, "Be not overcome of evil," but also, "Overcome evil with good." Endeavour, by taking any opportunities that you can find, to overcome the unkindness and the persecution of others; and do not bear malice in your hearts. These are the rules, indeed, not only of Christian but of worldly wisdom. A character such as we have drawn to-day is not only a Christian one, but it is precisely one which you would admire: one who bears no grudge, who resists evil, who scorns to oppress the weak. And why? Because such a character appeals to the nobler and holier feelings of your nature; feelings which God has put into your hearts, and which He will ripen into Christian graces by the help and strength of His Holy Spirit.

—*Rev. E. St John Parry, M.A.*

Be Patient

"*Be patient towards all men.*"—1 *Thess. v.* 14.

What a very practical subject for us to talk about! And how important a subject, in view of the thousand things that fret and worry, even the children, in this modern life of ours! Think of

I. The Grace of Patience.—The word seems to mean and include long-mindedness, quietness of spirit, self-mastery, and the power of waiting. Waiting is one of the very hardest things we have to do, and so it becomes one of the best tests of character. Illustrate how the host of Israel was tried on the shores of the Red Sea, when it was called to be patient by the words, "Stand still, and see the salvation of God."

Patience, as a disposition, depends on our natural character; some folk are hasty, impulsive, passionate, while others are slow, quiet, lacking energy, and there is not much credit in their patience. Patience, as a Christian grace, is something to win; and it depends on the help of God gained in watching and prayer. Perhaps it would make prayer quite a new thing to some of us, if we would begin to ask for so plain a thing as *patience*, one of the graces which we so constantly, and so badly, want for the common scenes of every-day life.

II. Its Sphere.—Our text says, "Toward *all men*." So evidently there are spheres for us all, spheres for everybody.

1. *Those who live with us in the house.* Parents, other children, servants. Every household is a little world full of various tempers and characters. And each household is a perpetual battle-field, or a peaceful home, according as its members have learned the preciousness of patience, and constantly practise it. Fathers and mothers learn to be patient out of many hard experiences, and nothing helps them more than to see that their children are trying to be patient with each other.

2. *Those who grieve us by their conduct.* Sometimes there are husbands and fathers who grieve us sadly by their drunken wicked ways; and poor suffering wives who greatly need the counsel of our text, "Be patient." Sometimes there are sons and daughters who break away from home restraints, and wander away into the prodigal's sins and sorrows; and concerning them we can only be patient with the "patience of hope." Sometimes there are

young children, whose wilfulness and disobedience make us sadly fear what their future characters will be; and we can only triumph over them by being patient, and bearing day by day wise and gracious influence over them. Little folks do not think how sad and sore and anxious they often make mothers' hearts.

3. *Those who resist our efforts to do them good.* Apply to the teacher's efforts in a Sunday-school class; or to a sister's kindly influence on wayward brothers. Those who can be patiently continuing in well-doing may hope at last to overcome.

4. *Those who are wearisome to us through infirmity of temper or through sickness.* And some people are very trying. Old Mr Jay, of Bath, used quaintly to say, "God lives with a great many people that I should not like to live with." Some of our friends are always feeling weak, or are always in pain, and this is likely to make them fretful. The anxieties of business bring grave cares to our fathers, and make them sad and depressed when they come home. We must be "patient towards all men," whether they try us by their infirmities or by their sins.

III. The Possibility of the Exercise of Patience.—Can we be patient? Yes, if we will cherish right thoughts concerning God and men; and if we will pray for patience day by day. We should think often of *God's* patience, e.g. to the old world, toward Israel, to those who crucified His Son, etc. We should think often of *Christ's* patience; with the people, with the disciples, with Judas, with Peter, and with us. Impress what heart-peace and what home-peace will come to us all if we will but "let patience have her perfect work."

A Soft Answer

"*A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.*"—*Prov. xv.* 1.

A soft answer—a kind, gentle, patient, peaceful answer, to an angry, loud, rude word—turns away wrath, sends it off so that it passes by you like an arrow glancing off a shield. A great many people do not think so. A great many little children do not believe it. When somebody says anything that is unkind to them, speaks to them loudly or rudely, they think the best way to answer is as the echo answers—to give back to the boy who speaks rudely to them a rude answer, or to be angry with an angry girl—to speak loudly to the one who speaks loudly to them. But that is not right. Suppose you had been playing with matches, and something in the room had caught fire, and suppose your little brother came in and said, "Let us light some *more* matches!" Why, you would say, "No, no! That would only make the fire worse. Let us call mother, and get some water to throw on the flame, or perhaps the *house* will be burnt down."

Well, if anybody says a rude or angry word to you, and you answer in the same way, do you know what you are doing? You are adding fire to fire, you are helping to make a bad thing worse, you are multiplying one evil by two—the very worst sort of arithmetic. But "a soft answer" is like *water* to fire, it helps to put the flame out. That is what the firemen do: they go rushing by, their horses tearing along as fast as they can go towards the burning house; they pour cold water over the fire, and so put it out. If you give a soft answer to angry words you will be one of God's firemen, you will have helped to put out a fire that might have done great harm. So remember, when you are spoken to rudely or roughly, to be like a fireman and give back a *soft* answer; for a *grievous* word, an angry, rude word, stirreth up anger and makes it burn more fiercely.

You have been to the Zoo, and as you walked along past the cages you saw some of the lions, tigers, and all the other terrible animals asleep, and you thought it would be nice to stir one of them up with a stick, but nurse, or father, or mother would not let you; and if the keeper found you doing that you would find yourself outside the gardens very soon. You must not stir up those beasts.

Well, there is a tiger or lion sleeping in most of the people you meet. Little boys even have tigers in them—quite fierce ones, too—and one way to stir them up is to speak rudely or roughly to them; so, whenever you are tempted to do so, remember that you are at the Zoological Gardens, and that you must not *stir up the wild beasts.*

It is very *hard* to speak softly to people sometimes, very hard indeed. But it is worth while learning to do it; and though hard, like most other good things, it is not *too* hard. It can be managed. *How?* First of all, by making up your mind to do it, and then setting to work to practise the art of soft speaking. That is the way in which everything great is done in this world—by practice.

I know a man, a friend of mine, who was the most hot-tempered man in the neighbourhood. But he took himself in hand one day, gave himself a sort of shaking up, and said to himself: "Now, I *will* govern you!" He made up his mind, and then he practised patience; and to-day he is the most patient man I know. He has not lost the power of being angry when mean and bad things are done, but he has cured that habit of speaking angrily, and so he goes through life with quietness and power. So do *you* make up your mind and get to work in the same way, asking God to help you and give you strength, and then you too will be able by and by to govern your own spirit, which is a greater thing than to conquer a city.

But perhaps you will say, "If I never answer angrily, people will think me a coward." No! That is a great mistake. It needs no courage to be angry and loud and rude. Bullies and cowards have always plenty of angry words at their command. Brave boys do not brag nor threaten; and the bravest thing of all is patience and self-mastery. If I were to ask you what was the greatest thing Jesus Christ ever did, you would say, perhaps—"That was a great thing when He quieted the storm and the sea with a word." Yes, it was; and *that* was a great thing when He fed the thousands with a few loaves. Yes, but He did something greater still. Well, you'll say, "That was a great thing when he stood over the grave of Lazarus, who had been dead four days, and brought him to life again."

Yes, but there was something greater *still.* I will tell you what it was. When He let men take Him and tie His hands; when He let them put a crown of thorns on His head; when He let them beat Him, and let them put the Cross on His shoulder, when He let them nail Him to the Cross, and kill Him; He never once thought of getting angry or striking back, but bore it all in patience. *That* was the greatest thing that Jesus Christ ever did; that was the greatest thing as far as we know, that God Himself ever did. The highest courage is the Cross of Christ. And you will prove yourselves truly brave, each one of you, *not* when you strike back, not when you answer angrily, but when, rising above the temptation, you master yourselves, and master also those around you. You will show that you have courage—not the cheap and easy courage of the coward, which is nothing but words and bluster—but real courage, the courage of Christ Himself.

If you learn this text, and pray God to help you to keep, it will make you happy through life; it will fill your whole life with peace.

Take it home with you to-day—"A soft answer turneth away wrath, but

grievous words stir up anger." Take it with you to school to-morrow. Take it to the class and the playground. Never go anywhere without it. Let it be one of your companion-words, and may God help you to heed it each time it speaks to you.—*Rev. J. M. Gibbon, M.A.*

Doing Unpleasant Things

"*If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself.*"—*St. Matt. xvi.* 24.

It is easy to do the things we like. A boy at school gets through his arithmetic with very little trouble; he likes sums. But the boy who sits next in class finds it terribly hard work even to do simple division; he gets through the lesson, but it is difficult. He does not like figures; why they should have been invented beats his imagination, but he loves geography, and can draw a map without tracing-paper. We all find it so much easier to do the interesting tasks. Ruskin says the thing that pleases us is the thing we can do best. The way in which unpleasant tasks are done reveals the character of the doer. There is an old story of St Philip Neri. He was sent by the Pope to examine the character of a famous nun; she had been the subject of wonderful visions, until her name was a household word in Rome. There was a great movement set on foot to secure her canonisation. They wanted that she should wear the coveted title of saint. At last the Pope yielded, and sent St Philip Neri to make inquiries. St Philip was a bluff old man with a ready wit and practical common sense; he saddled his horse and rode away. It was a long journey to the convent; the roads were bad, and the rain fell in torrents. When he arrived at the door he was muddy and wet. The Sister came to receive him. She was all sweetness and humility, but somehow the old man did not like her ways; he was suspicious that her virtues were upon the surface. He sat down and said, "Sister, pull off my boots," as he stretched forth his foot showing a muddy covering. The nun coloured, and tried to wither him with a look. She bent over the boot slowly and with great dignity, but she did not touch the mud. Philip laughed. "Ah," he said, "the service you like is not of the unpleasant sort." He rode back to the Pope with an unfavourable report.

St Benedict Labre was described as the most noble of the brotherhood to which he belonged, because he did the most repulsive things. He kept his body unwashed for more than half a lifetime. This was supposed to be a mark of great humility. I think it was the indication of laziness; certainly it was no part of sanctity. The Spirit of Jesus enables us to do unpleasant tasks without murmuring, and even to find in them a joy which is more than satisfaction. Love does not choose its tasks: it only asks permission to serve. Mother does not pick and choose what she will do for us: it is enough that it is for our sakes. The unpleasant things may be crosses; they are certainly stepping-stones by which we climb to our better selves. Augustine once said, "Love God, and then do what you like." He meant love to God makes us like what God likes. It will enable us to find delight in doing His will, though it may be in things we would not have chosen. They are poor soldiers who volunteer for the safe places and the easy positions; courageous men ask for the difficult posts. In moments of great heroism they clamour for the front rank of the firing line; they will risk their lives for their country, for their flag. A general once said as he pointed to the enemy's cannon upon the heights, "Our colours must spike those guns!" And away his followers rode in the smoke from the cannon's mouth, to capture the weapons or to die in the attempt. They loved to please their leader. Jesus said, "I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work Thou gavest Me to

do." We may possess so much of the Spirit of the Master that of us also may be recorded that our delight was in the law of our God. If the task is difficult there is the more satisfaction in doing it for love's sake. We would not like, when we see our Master face to face, to look up into His eyes and say, "We always chose the easy things."—*John C. Carlile.*

Good for Evil

"*Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*"—*Rom. xii.* 21.

Now I want you to learn very perfectly something Jesus said about love to God and man, and then I shall tell you a nice story about a dear little girl, whom we read about in the Bible, who certainly must have loved God and man.

Say after me—"I say unto you, Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."

Now that is what Jesus says about it; He bids us not only love our friends, but——? Our enemies. And do good not only to those who love us, but——? To those who hate us. "Does anybody hate us?"

Well, only bad naughty people would do so; but, you see, Jesus says we are not to be bad again, even to them. We are to——? Do good to them. And——? Pray for them. Yes; pray for them, that God would make them better, even if they behave badly to us: that is the meaning of "using us despitefully" and persecuting us.

Now, children, think a minute—does anyone behave ill to you? Do any of the big boys sometimes tease you, and throw stones at you, or plague you? I do not want you to tell tales, so we will not have their names, please. I only want you just to think if anyone ever "despitefully uses you, and persecutes you"; and if they do, do you do as Jesus says? Do you love them? Do you try to do good to them? Do you, above all, remember to pray for them—"O God, make that naughty boy who teases me, a good boy, for Jesus' sake"?

Perhaps you have not done so before; but now you know what Jesus bids, you will try to do so for the future? Ah, I am glad to see so many hands up. You must try and remember, the next time you are teased, and then you cannot think how much happier it will make you. I dare say it has made you cross, and unhappy, and ready to cry. But if you lift up your heart to God, and pray that little prayer for them, all the unhappy feeling will go out of your heart directly; you will feel so glad that you will not seem to mind the teasing half so much.

Now say again all those kind words of Jesus, that I may be sure you all have them perfect, and then we will go on to the story.

A long time ago, when God's people, the Jews, lived in Palestine, there was a great deal of fighting. Some people who lived near them, who did not know about God, came into the Jew's country with a great army; army means——? A large number of soldiers. Yes.

They wanted to steal the Jews' things, and kill them if they could. Was not that wicked? How many Commandments did they break, do you think? The Eighth and Sixth. Yes; and they knew very well that stealing and killing were wicked things to do, although they had not heard about God's commands, as you have. They knew very well that they would not like anybody to do so to them, and, therefore, it must be—what——? Wicked.

Yes; can you tell me the text about that——? "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do unto them." So they were afraid of

being caught, and went very slyly, all broken up into little companies, some going one way, and some another; and then no doubt they thought, "Now, if the Jews come running to drive one set of us away, the others can go on stealing what they can find."

Well, this sly plan succeeded; and amongst the things they stole, one was —only think—a poor little girl! Wouldn't you be sorry for her? Think, if a dreadful army could come here, and steal one of you away from home, and make you a slave! But God has kept all enemies away from England for a long time, and we must pray to Him to keep them away still. Those who go to church do pray so every Sunday, if they pray the prayers.

Well, so they ran off, and took the little girl away with them. How her parents would cry! and how she would cry! But her parents had taught her to love God, so they would feel sure she would pray to Him, and then He would take care of her; and that would comfort them.

God did take care of her: she was brought safely into the country of the enemies, and there she was made a little servant, to wait on the wife of the captain. There was no more learning from the Bible for her; no going to God's house; no seeing her dear parents and brothers and sisters; but God took care of her. She could pray to Him still, and so she was happy as a little servant.

Soon she had a chance of returning good for evil. Her master was a very grand man, and his king was very fond of him; but he had a dreadful trial to bear, and perhaps was not half so happy as his wife's little maid; for he did not know about God, but worshipped idols. Which commandments did he break——? The First and Second.

His trial was, that he had a dreadful disease, called leprosy, which caused him great suffering, and besides, made him shocking to look at. This dreadful disease was one which no doctor could cure.

So the little girl thought to herself, "Well, God could cure him, and our good prophet Elisha, who teaches us all about God and the Bible, he would tell him how to pray to God, and what to do that God might cure him."

So one day she said to her mistress, "Oh, how I do wish my master was with the prophet we have in Israel! for he would recover him of his leprosy, he would make him well; for God helps him to do wonderful miracles, that nobody can do without God's power."

I dare say they talked a good deal about it, and the little maid would tell her mistress of many of the wonderful miracles which God had helped Elisha to do.

Then the mistress told her husband about all these things the little Jewish girl had said, till at last the king himself got to hear about it. The king thought it was, at all events, worth trying; and he told Naaman (for that was the captain's name) that he did not know this wonderful prophet, or where he lived; but he said, of course, if it is true, the King of Israel will know all about it. So "come now, I will give you a letter to take to the king."

Well, he wrote a letter, and Naaman took it; and when he got there, the letter was opened, and it said, "I have sent you Naaman, my captain, that you may make him better of his leprosy."

Then the King of Israel was in a great fright, and he said, "Now, what's to be done——? Why, the King of Syria has done this on purpose to make a quarrel with me. He knows very well I can't cure this man; it is only God Who can do that. Does he think I am God, to kill or to make alive? He knows I can't, and he has only sent this message in order that he may next say, 'Oh, you would not do what I asked you; so now I shall come and fight you again with all my army.'"

Well, Elisha the prophet heard of it, and he sent word to the king—"Why are you so frightened? Send this man to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel." So Naaman went, with all his fine carriages and horses and servants, to Elisha's door; and Elisha sent him word what he was to do. He was to go and take seven dips in the River Jordan, and then he should be well. God would make that the way for his getting better. At first he was very proud and cross, and said he could just as well dip in a river in his own country; but afterwards, when his servants begged him to try, he did, and he was quite well in a minute after the seven dips. As soon as ever he believed God could cure him, and did what God by His prophet told him, he was made well. And thus the little girl returned good to him for the evil he had done to her.

And now tell me what lessons you have learnt from this story.—To return good for evil; to believe God, and do what He bids us. Yes. Now, ask God to help you to do these things; and mind you tell your brothers and sisters all this story when you get home.—*E. A. Bromehead.*

Critical Notes on the Epistle

Provide Things Honest (See 2 Cor. viii. 21).—Being careful beforehand that your fair and honest dealing may be visible to all men. The Apostle does not here insist on the duty of honesty or fairness, for that all Christians might be supposed to know and practise, but on the duty of being careful to let all men perceive it; taking care not to be suspected or misunderstood. It is a great error to be indifferent to such misunderstanding. It is uncharitable to others and leads to evil consequences, by causing good to be evil spoken of. It is to be observed that the word here translated "honest," means "fair," "honourable," "seemly." The Apostle's precept therefore, extends to all these meanings, and we are to take care that our "fairness," and "honour," and seemliness of conduct should be seen and known by all men. (Compare Prov. iii. 4, from which this precept is derived.)

If It Be Possible.—It is not always possible; for some men are so perversely bent on wrong and quarrelling, that none can keep at peace with them. But it has been well said that it takes two people to make a quarrel; so if, "as far as lieth in ourselves," we do our best to keep peace, quarrels will, at the least be very rare and unusual.

Give Place unto Wrath.—From the quotation which follows (taken from Deut. xxxii. 35; Ps. xciv. 1), it appears that St Paul means, "Stand you aside, and leave the offender to the wrath of God." Do not take upon yourselves the task of punishment or revenge. That belongs to God. Do not you usurp upon it.

Therefore If Thine Enemy.—Instead of taking vengeance upon an enemy, do him all the good you can. Give him meat in his hunger and drink in his thirst. Let these be the only coals of fire which you heap upon his head. Conquer his wrongs with your benefits. Never allow yourself to be so far defeated by another man's evil, as to seek to repay it with evil. When he does you wrong, look upon it that he has challenged you, as it were, to battle; and see that you win the battle by doing him more good than he does you evil.

Anecdotes and Illustrations

Queen Victoria and the Highlander.—Among the many traits of kindness and condescension in her Majesty's character the following is worthy of

record: One day, while taking a drive in her carriage, she noticed a man on the road with a pretty large bundle, apparently very much fatigued. With her usual condescension she entered into conversation with him, by inquiring where he came from and whither he was going; in answer to which he told her that he had come from Cromarty and was on his way to Dundee, intending to cross the Capel as being the nearest road. Her Majesty then remarked that, as he appeared to be much fatigued, and his bundle was apparently heavy, if he would put it in the carriage, perhaps her coachman, who was also a highlander, would take him up. The weary wanderer was thus taken a few miles on his way, and, as was to be expected, was greatly affected by the considerate kindness and condescension shown him by her Majesty.

Condescension.—The Rev. F. W. Robertson's biographer tells us that "in the drawing-room he would separate himself from those he liked best to converse with, and spend a great part of the evening by the side of the most neglected, sacrificing himself to brighten a dull existence."

Things Honest.—Many years ago it was proposed to the Duke of Wellington to purchase a farm in the neighbourhood of Strathfieldsaye, which lay contiguous to his estate, and was therefore a valuable acquisition; to which he assented. When the purchase was completed, his steward congratulated him upon having such a bargain, as the seller was in difficulties, and forced to part with it. "What do you mean by a bargain?" said the Duke. The other replied, "It was valued at £1100, and we have got it for £800." "In that case," said the Duke, "you will please to carry the extra £300 to the late owner, and never talk to me of cheap land again."

Vengeance is God's.—A Spanish cavalier having killed a Moorish gentleman at Granada, in a duel, instantly fled from justice. He was vigorously pursued, but availing himself of a sudden turn of the road, he leaped, unperceived, over a garden wall. The proprietor, who was also a Moor, happened to be walking in the garden, and the Spaniard fell upon his knees before him, acquainted him with his case, and in the most pathetic manner implored concealment. The Moor listened to him with compassion, and generously promised his assistance. He then locked him in the summer-house, and left him, with an assurance that when night approached he would provide for his escape. A few hours afterwards the dead body of his son was brought to him, and the description of the murderer exactly agreed with the appearance of the Spaniard whom he had then in custody. He concealed the horror and suspicion which he felt, and retiring to his chamber, remained there till midnight. Then going privately into the garden, he opened the door of the summer-house, and thus accosted the cavalier: "Christian! the youth whom you have murdered was my only son. Your crime merits the severest punishment. But I have solemnly pledged my word for your security; and I disdain to violate even a rash engagement with a cruel enemy." He conducted the Spaniard to the stables, and furnished him with one of his swiftest mules. "Fly," said he "whilst the darkness of night conceals you; your hands are polluted with blood; but God is just, and I humbly thank Him that my faith is unspotted, and that I have referred judgment unto Him."

The Way to Conquer.—"I'll master it," said the axe, and his blows fell heavily on the iron; but every blow made his edge more blunt, till he ceased to strike. "Leave it to me," said the saw; and with his relentless teeth he worked backward and forward on its surface till they were all worn down or broken, then he fell aside. "Ha! ha!" said the hammer, "I knew you wouldn't succeed; I'll show you the way"; but at his first fierce stroke, off flew his head, and the iron remained as before. "Shall I try?" asked the

soft, small flame. But they all despised the flame; but he curled gently round the iron, and embraced it, and never left it till it melted under his irresistible influence. There are hearts hard enough to resist the force of wrath, the malice of persecution, and the fury of pride, so as to make their acts recoil on their adversaries; but there is a power stronger than any of these, and hard indeed is that heart that can resist love.

Evil for Evil.—"When I was a little girl," says a lady, "I learned a good lesson. One frosty morning I was looking out of a window into my father's farm-yard where stood many cows, oxen, and horses, waiting for drink. The morning was very cold, the animals stood meek and quiet, till one of the cows wanted to move, and tried to turn round. In trying to do this she hit against her neighbour; whereupon that one kicked, and hit the one next to her. In five minutes the late peaceful congregation of animals was in great turmoil, furiously kicking and butting each other. My mother laughed and said 'See what comes of kicking when you are hit; just so have I seen one cross word set a whole family by the ears.' Afterwards if my brothers or myself were cross or irritable she would say, 'Take care, my children, remember how the fight in the straw-yard began; never give back a kick for a hit, and you will save yourself and others a great deal of trouble.'"

The Forgiveness of Injuries.—If a man commits an offence against us, misrepresents us, insults us, injures us in any way, what are we to do? Brood over it? That is what some Christian people nearly always do. It is wonderful what care they take to get all pain and suffering out of an offence they can. They might have brushed it away at once and have done with it; but no, the hasty, bitter word, the selfish act, they lay upon their memory; and they will not forget it, whatever else they forget. . . . If a man injures you, do not brood over it. Nor must you talk about it to everybody you meet. What is your motive for speaking about the injury? Do you want your friends to take sides with you against the offender? You ought to want to make the offender himself to take sides with you against the offence. The more people know of the wrong, the more feeling you can create against the wrongdoer, the harder you make it for him to acknowledge his fault.—*R. W. Dale.*

An Incident in the New Zealand War.—The incident about to be related occurred during the storming of one of the Maori pas, and after its native defenders had been compelled by the British troops to evacuate their stronghold and endeavour to save their lives by flight. A British officer, while leading his men to the attack on the pa, was struck on the head by a ball from a Maori gun, and, receiving a severe scalp wound, was left prostrate on the sod, his companions pressing forward to mount the hill upon which the doomed pa was situated. The wounded man lay alone in his solitude, suffering and smarting from his wound, but unable to raise himself or return to the tent of his detachment for medical aid and succour. The loss of blood, and the fever which so rapidly follows gunshot wounds, began to tell upon him, and his sufferings were soon aggravated by the pains of a burning thirst. While thus tortured with the smart of his wounds and his craving for drink, the natives had been dislodged and forced to flee, anxious only to keep out of range of the British marksmen. One of these flying Maoris perchance took a direction towards the spot where the wounded officer was lying. Seeing the savage warrior passing close at hand, the British soldier earnestly entreated the fugitive Maori to stay and fetch him water to save his life, or at least to relieve his pain. The sight of his suffering foe, prostrate and helpless, wrung with anguish from his parching thirst and his painful wound, seems to have touched the heart of the Maori, and with a

humanity and a heedlessness of his own preservation, he instantly paused and rushed to the nearest stream to procure what his dying enemy had implored him to bring. While administering the water to the wounded man, this humane and generous Maori was shot through the heart with a bullet from a British rifle, in the very act of doing an unselfish and generous kindness to a mortal foe.

Southey and the Black Boy.—"When I was a small boy," says Southey, "there was a black boy in the neighbourhood, by the name of Jim Dick. I and a number of my playfellows were one evening collected together at our sports, and began tormenting the poor black by calling him 'negro, blackamoor,' and other degrading epithets: the poor fellow appeared excessively grieved at our conduct, and soon left us. We soon afterwards made an appointment to go a-skating in the neighbourhood, and on the day of the appointment I had the misfortune to break my skates, and I could not go without borrowing Jim's skates. I went to him, and asked him for them. 'O yes, Robert, you may have them, and welcome,' was his answer. When I went to return them, I found Jim sitting by the fire in the kitchen, reading the Bible. I told him I had returned the skates, and was under great obligations to him for his kindness. He looked at me as he took his skates, and, with tears in his eyes, said to me, 'Robert, don't ever call me blackamoor again,' and immediately left the room. The words pierced my heart, and from that time I resolved never again to abuse a poor black."

Questions on the Epistle

1. What is this passage about? 2. Who wrote it? 3. What instruction does Paul give as to our conduct towards those who have done us ill? 4. From what source did Paul quote when he wrote "Vengeance is mine," etc.? 5. What is to be our conduct towards our enemy in distress? 6. How are we to overcome evil? 7. Show, how by living according to these precepts we should be following the example of our Lord?

Books of Reference

H. C. G. Moule on "Romans"; "Expositor's Bible"; *Alford's* "New Testament for English readers"; "Commentaries" by *Beet*, *Sadler*, *Godet*, and *Lyman Abbott*; *Butler's* "Bible Work"; *Dale's* "Laws of Christ for Common Life."

General Subjects

Open Sesame

"*The unsearchable riches of Christ.*"—*Eph. iii.* 8.

I read over again last week a story I hadn't read for years, but one which I am sure is quite familiar to every boy and girl in this congregation. I mean the story of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves. You remember all about it! Ali Baba had gone into the forest one day to cut some wood, and was on the point of leading his asses home well laden with the wood he had cut, when all of a sudden he saw a great cloud of dust that seemed to be approaching him. Gazing at it for a moment or two, he saw the dust was caused by a troop of horsemen riding rapidly towards him. The sight of them put

poor Ali Baba into a panic! He made sure they were robbers, so without considering what might become of his asses, he determined to save himself by climbing up into a tree near by and hiding himself among its branches.

Well, as it happened, the horsemen were robbers, and they drew rein just at the foot of a rock near which the tree stood in which Ali Baba was hiding. He counted them—there were forty of them. They were so near to him, he could not only watch all their actions but he could hear all they said. And among other things he heard and saw this. He saw the captain of the band make his way through some shrubs that grew at the base of the rock, and then heard him pronounce these words, "Open Sesame," whereupon a door opened in the rock, through which the entire troop passed in, and then the door shut again. They remained within for some time, and then they came out again, the captain coming last and pronouncing the words "Shut Sesame" to make the door shut fast. And then once again the whole troop rode away the way they came.

For some time Ali Baba remained in the tree, too frightened to move. Then his courage gradually came back and he climbed down. Then he thought he would like to see if by pronouncing the same words the door would open for him as it had done for the robber chief. So he made his way through the shrubs and said "Open Sesame," and sure enough the door flew wide open. And when Ali Baba passed in he could scarcely believe his eyes. For he found himself in a spacious vault all full of precious and beautiful things—silks and satins, and above everything else, heaps of gold and silver. He found himself in a word, master of a rich treasure-house. He loaded his asses that day with gold and returned home a rich man. I need not follow the story and relate the adventures of the forty thieves; this is the one thing I want to notice, the robbers' cave was a mine of wealth to Ali Baba and the words "Open Sesame" always opened it to him.

And as I read about the robbers' cave I thought I knew of another infinite and exhaustless mine of wealth. I read in the Old Book about "the unsearchable riches of Christ," "the exceeding riches of God's grace," "the riches of His glory." This is better wealth than silver or gold or precious stones. In the treasure-house of God there is mercy stored up, and love stored up, and strength stored up. And if we can only get possession of all these things we become rich unto eternal life. And then I thought, too, that we have got an "Open Sesame" by which we can get possession of all this wealth. Do you know what that "Open Sesame" is? It is *prayer*. If we only ask God in prayer, He will bestow all these great gifts upon us. Take, for instance, the gift of *mercy*. A woman came to Jesus one day all broken with sorrow for her sin. She was so broken, she could not speak, she could only sob and cry. But Jesus knew what she wanted. Her very crying was a prayer. And it was an "Open Sesame" to the treasure-house. She went away pardoned and forgiven. "Her sins," said Jesus, "which are many, are forgiven."

Take again the gift of *strength*—strength, I mean, to do the right at all costs. That is a gift we can get out of the treasure-house. There was once a great scholar and a great saint named Origen. It wasn't easy to be a Christian in his days and one day Origen was called upon to suffer for his faith. And he shrank from the suffering and was on the point of betraying his Lord when a voice said to him, "Pray, pray," and so Origen prayed. And as he prayed, strength came and he was helped to be true to his Lord. Prayer was the "Open Sesame" to the treasure-house.

And you, dear children, have got this "Open Sesame" at your disposal. I have no words to describe the wonderful things that are in God's treasure-

house. They surpass our best thoughts. He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think. And they are all at our disposal if we pray in the name of Jesus. You remember what Jesus said, "If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it." Well, ask, then, for strength, and courage, and truth, and purity and love. God will give them to you.

"Above our utmost wants, His love and power can bless,
To praying souls He always grants more than they can express."

Ali Baba's treasure only made him rich for this world; God's great gifts will make you rich unto eternal life.—*Rev. J. D. Jones, M.A., B.D.*

Walking with Wise Men

"*He that walketh with wise men shall be wise.*"—*Prov. xiii.* 20.

Nothing is more important for young people than the choice of companions. Bad companions have been the ruin of thousands. But a wise and God-fearing companion has been the rock and rescue of many a tried and tempted one. Making this one remark that "the wise" in this text are those the foundation of whose life and character is *religious principle*, let me inquire how walking with wise men will help to make boys and girls themselves wise.

I. There is the Power of Sympathy.—Imitation is one of the earliest powers awakened in a little child. He learns to speak by imitation. He imitates sound; he catches the accent of his parent or nurse, just as in after life his very walking in the street is often that of his father. This is the power of sympathy, then, in everyday life. And the same power acts on the life of the soul. One of our Lord's disciples sees Him praying; he is touched: "And it came to pass, when He ceased," the disciple said: "Lord, teach us to pray." The same power of Christian influence is seen, more or less, in the life of every truly good man. Robert Burns never forgot his father at "family worship" in the little kitchen—still shown to the summer visitor—in the cottage near Ayr; and "The Cottar's Saturday Night" was the fruit of this recollection. Few men in their day, and in very different circles, exercised more deep, quiet, living power for good than John Brown of Haddington, and John Angell James of Birmingham. Dr Chalmers stirred a whole nation. John Wesley put new life into innumerable souls in England. How thankful then, my dear children, you should feel to be within the range of such wise Christian influence! There is danger in the midst of your higher education in the present day—an education in which, in itself, no one rejoices more than I do—that this may be forgotten. The first sure sign that a lad is going wrong is when he begins to undervalue the safeguard of a Christian home.

II. The Force of Example.—The force of example is closely related to the power of sympathy. "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Let me give an illustration. Here is a man who says the Word of God is in the Bible, but the Bible is not altogether the Word of God—that there is a mixture of error with truth; he makes himself the judge, framing a standard and adjusting scales of his own, and opening the door for some other man to frame a standard and adjust scales *of his own*; till when one takes away Moses, and another takes away all the Divine working in the Acts of the Apostles, and a third makes out the Saviour of sinners to be nothing better than a great moral chief or martyr, we have little left but the boards of a Bible that has been destroyed amongst them. None of these, my dear children, are

safe religious examples; and whoever wishes to be a wise man or a wise boy or girl, will walk with none of them. It is perfectly possible both to be a man of science and a man of religion. During the meeting of the British Association some time ago, in Edinburgh, Sir William Thomson the President, was one of a little band of great and devout men who spent an hour together every morning, before the sittings began, in earnest prayer to God for guidance in the work of the day that was to follow. Learning never looks to me so beautiful as when, like Mary, it is sitting at the feet of Jesus; or, like one of the "virgins" of David's Forty-fifth Psalm, it is following in the wake of "the daughter of the King."

III. The Influence of Conversation.—You are all familiar with the power of a word. Who can estimate the power for evil even of one wicked word? One grain of iodine, I have seen it stated, is able to colour seven thousand times its own weight of water. Equally wide is the circle of one wicked word, one bad companion, one evil counsellor. An immense amount of good, however, can be accomplished, by the occasional dropping of the good seed. "A word in season, how good is it!" Let me again give an illustration or two. How was poor Bunyan first led to see the light when, in the midst of his doubts and fears, all was darkness in his soul? He overheard three godly women speaking in the street one day about regeneration; he sought their company and listened to their words; an entire change took place in him; he found peace in believing. Wilberforce once "the joy and crown of Doncaster races," was spending the winter at Nice. A minister was also there for his health. They met in their daily walks. The clergyman offered to Wilberforce to spend a part of each day with him in reading the New Testament. "The entrance of God's Word gave light": in one of the forenoon walks at Nice, a great defender of Gospel truth was born, and the first blow was struck that issued in the great triumph of Negro Emancipation.

In conclusion, then, if you are wise, you will walk with wise men; and walking with wise men will make you wiser. "To him that hath shall be given." If you choose wisdom, the choice will bring you more wisdom. Fellow-travellers in wisdom's ways, help each other on.

—Rev. H. T. Howat.

Swearing

"*Swear not at all.*"—*St Matt. v.* 34.

An eccentric old lady who was walking along the streets of a great city, was shocked to hear two boys swearing. She stopped and said, kindly, "Boys, my eyesight is poor. Lead me across the street, and here are a few pennies for you."

They were very willing to do this, and having carefully led her across the dangerous thoroughfare, received the promised pay. The boys were about to go their way, when the old lady said in the same gentle tone as before, "My name is Cooke. Whenever you feel like swearing, say *Cooke*. That won't hurt you or me. Say *Cooke* just as often as you please. Boys, whatever you say, never take the holy name of God in vain. It is not only a useless and wicked habit, but it is one which He will severely punish."

This was an admirable sermon, and worthy of being preached many times in many places, and to all sorts and conditions of people.

To "swear like a trooper" is a proverb; but it is hardly fair to charge all this dreadful wickedness to these poor fellows.

Burton mentions in his Diary, that the learned physician Linacre, shortly

before his death, when reading the words of the text, threw the book from him, saying, "We are not Christians, or the Gospel is wrong: we swear too much, or Christ forbids too much."

The Orientals have always been celebrated for their profaneness, and the evil habit seems inveterate and universal. When Simon Peter began to curse and to swear, on the memorable night of our Lord's trial, it was his old habit, which, under high excitement, came back upon him. The people in those Eastern lands still use the same sort of oaths which Jesus condemned. They swear by their head, by their life, by Heaven, and by a variety of other things.

La Fontaine, chaplain of the Prussian army, once preached an earnest sermon on the sin and folly of yielding to a hasty temper. The next day a major of the regiment accosted him, in no very good humour, saying: "Well, sir! I think you made use of the prerogative of your office to give me some very sharp hits yesterday."

"I certainly thought of you while I was preparing the sermon," the chaplain answered, "but I had no intention of being personal or sharp."

"Well, it's of no use," said the major; "I have a hasty temper, and I cannot help it. I cannot control it; the thing is impossible."

The following Sunday La Fontaine preached on self-deception, and the vain excuses which men are accustomed to make. "Why," said he, "a man will declare that it is impossible to control his temper, when he very well knows that were the same provocation to happen in the presence of his sovereign, he not only *could,* but *would* control himself entirely. And yet he dares to say that the continual presence of the King of kings imposes upon him neither restraint nor fear."

The next day the preacher met the officer again, who said humbly, "You were right yesterday, chaplain. Hereafter, whenever you see me in danger of falling, remind me of the King!"

I have often thought, as I read the notice in public conveyances, "No smoking allowed in this car," that it was a pity the companies would not add, "No swearing." Decent people are often more annoyed by *oaths* than by smoke.

"Why may not folks swear if they choose to do so?" some very independent character may ask. I answer, they may: but if they are wise, they will take a little time to reflect before they venture to do it. It is our Lord Jesus Christ Who gives the command of the text: "*Swear not at all.*"

Charlie Harold, speaking to his grandmother about something he did not like, exclaimed, "By thunder!"

"Hush!" said the old lady, "you must not swear, my dear. Don't you know that Jesus said, '*Swear not at all!*'"

"Did He? Well, I didn't know it was swearing to say 'By thunder,' or 'By golly.' Is it, grandma?"

"All such expressions, my dear, in which the word by is used, partake of the nature of swearing, and a boy who wishes to be good will never let them fall from his lips."

Charlie sat silent for several minutes, in grave thought, and then said, "Grandma, what makes the newspaper swear every morning?"

"Does it?" inquired the old lady, looking over the top of her spectacles with curious eyes.

"Yes. It says, 'By telegraph.'"

The old lady could not help laughing, but she explained to Charlie the difference between an exclamation such as "By thunder," used to give emphasis to a remark, and an incomplete sentence such as "By telegraph." The

little boy determined that he would not offend in this way again; and I have told you the story, hoping that you may make the same wise rule.

I. It is Mean to Swear.—To use the holy name of God in this thoughtless way wounds the feelings of those who love and reverence Him as a Father.

This is often done when it is impossible for Christians to get out of hearing of the blasphemy, or to do anything to stop it. Cæsar Malan, of Geneva, Switzerland, began his career as an instructor of youth, but from his very childhood he had fallen into the sinful habit of profane swearing. He became so accustomed to it, that he swore in the presence of his scholars, without being conscious of it: and the consequence was that they learned to follow their teacher's example. One day when he heard the name of the great God coming from their thoughtless lips, it struck him very painfully, and he was about to rebuke them for it, when conscience reminded him that he did the same thing himself. How, then, could he blame them?

He instantly resolved to cure himself of this wretched habit, and calling the boys about him, he confessed to them how wrong he had been, and made an agreement that they were to watch him, and he would watch them.

Malan was very careful, not only because he knew that swearing was a great sin, but he felt his accountability as a teacher, and wished to set a good example to his pupils.

One day, when he was speaking to them, with great earnestness, he forgot himself, and used the words, *Mon Dieu* (My God). Instantly, the whole school arose and remained standing in respectful silence. Malan asked why they did this, when the head boy told him Whose Name he had just used. The master stood still, for a moment, and then, with great sorrow of heart, he acknowledged his sin before them all, and kneeling down, besought God to pardon the past, and to give him grace, in time to come, to honour His Holy Name. This touching scene was never forgotten by those who witnessed it.

II. It is Rude to Swear.—Many who would be very indignant not to be considered "*gentlemen*," are so far lacking in good breeding as to indulge in the inexcusable sin of cursing and blasphemy. No gentleman, in his sober senses, will be guilty of this breach of good manners.

An anecodote has been related to us of Admiral Hope's Christian firmness in rebuking swearing and improper language when uttered in his presence. Not many years ago a gentleman in a London omnibus was using very violent language—swearing, and taking the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in vain, when he was quietly rebuked and requested to desist by an elderly gentleman sitting opposite. The first named having resented the interference, the old officer added:

"Well, sir, I am extremely sorry you resent my words, simply requesting you to forbear insulting a very dear and precious name which I honour and love; and I can only say that, if you are dead to all ordinary consideration of common courtesy, and will persist in using the language you have done, you will compel me to do that which I shall be sorry to be obliged to do."

Upon this the angry man broke out afresh, and defied him, when the admiral stopped the omnibus and got out, the other watched him, expecting he would call a policeman, etc., but, seeing him walk quickly away, he remarked to another rider about his impertinence, when the person whom he addressed asked if he knew who it was that had been induced to remonstrate with him.

He replied, "No, nor did he care, except that he was very impertinent for threatening him in that way."

The other remarked that he was mistaken, for there had been no *threat*, but a meek and courteous remonstrance; that the gentleman was a most kind and benevolent man, and a gallant officer, who was quite incapable of any mean act.

"What right had he to threaten me? Did he not say he would do something if I did not desist?" said the other.

"Yes," replied the gentleman; "but that was no idle threat, and he did what he said he would be obliged to do."

"And what was that?" asked the angry man.

"Why, get out and walk, which his age and infirmities will hardly allow him to do; and he spends a great part of his income in succouring the afflicted and the destitute, and so would not like to throw away even a sixpence."

"You don't mean to say *that* was what he meant?" asked the angry man. "What is his name?"

"I am quite positive it was all he meant," replied the other; "and his name is Admiral Hope—a true-hearted, Christian man."

The angry man looked puzzled, then thoughtful, and at last cried out, "God forgive me! what a fool I have been! Give me his address, in case I should miss him."

He stopped the omnibus and jumped out to seek his faithful reprover, adding that he hoped it would make a new man of him, for he should never forget the lesson to the last day of his life.

This anecodote was related by the gentleman himself, who became a humble follower of the Lord Jesus, but who has since gone to his rest, trusting only in that blessed name which he had so blasphemed and lightly spoken of. There was another soul to whom this little incident had been so richly blest that it had sunk into his heart and sprung up to everlasting life.

III. Swearing is the Sign of an Empty Head.—When men, or boys, are heard mixing up a large assortment of "By Georges," and "By Jingoes," and "By Jupiters," with their talk, you may set it down as a fixed fact that their supply of words is scanty, and that there is a lack of ideas in their heads.

A late distinguished president of one of our Western colleges was one day walking near the college with his slow and noiseless step, when a youth, who had not observed his approach, while engaged in cutting wood, began to swear profanely, in his vexation. The doctor stepped up and said, "Give me the axe"; and then very quietly chopped the stick of wood up himself. Returning the axe to the young man, he said, in his peculiar manner, "You see now the wood may be chopped without swearing."

The reproof was effectual, and led, there is reason to believe, to an entire abandonment of that impious habit.

A good many other things besides chopping can be done without swearing quite as well as with it; and the breath wasted in blasphemy and impiety might better far be spent in prayer and praise to Him Who gives us every blessing, and Who spares from a thousand ills.

In the year 1793, at a place in France called Conches, the family and friends of a well-to-do peasant were sitting round a table on which there were all kinds of food. There was plenty of wine, too, which was not spared.

After the meal was over they all sat round the stove, and a lively conversation arose about the various conflicts in which the National Guard had been engaged, about the plundered cities and castles, and stories were related about the most horrid and cruel deeds which were all too common in that dreadful age.

By and by the conversation turned upon the subject of religion, and the

clergy, whom the people had been taught to hate, and who were then driven about from place to place like wild beasts.

"You are a lazy set," cried a young woman, the mistress of the house. "What are you doing, useless talkers? If it only depended on you, you would allow us to be murdered in our houses by these wretched priests? Is it not a shame," she said, in angry excitement, "that this priest of Conches is still lurking about in our neighbourhood? One fine morning he will bring his companions in robbery and murder with him and will fall upon us. If I were a man I would set you an example. Nevertheless, this evening he must be in my hands."

"Hold your tongue," said her husband, "we don't even know whereabouts this rascal is hiding."

"If that is all you want to know," said the woman, "I will soon find him. Go one of you to fetch the soldiers, and you, husband, lie down in bed and play the sick man. I will bring the priest soon enough. The soldiers will hide behind the curtains; at the right time they can seize him, and deliver him up, so that his life may be put an end to. What do you say to that?"

The wicked company praised the base and cruel plan, and soon the soldiers came, and they soon finished the remains of the supper.

"Make yourselves comfortable," cried the woman, as she lighted a lantern and threw a handkerchief over her head. "I will fetch the priest at once."

She went. Her husband lay down in the bed. The soldiers hid themselves. It was not long before the woman stood before the priest, whose place of concealment had been betrayed to her, and said weeping, and with a feigned voice, "Oh, M. le Curé! my husband lies dying. We cannot get any word out of him except 'Fetch the priest.' If you don't come the poor man will be lost! Do come! make haste!"

The good pastor did not hesitate a moment, and, ready to sacrifice his life to save a soul, he fell at once into the trap.

But God watched over the life of His servant, and brought the snares of the ungodly to no effect. The priest entered the house, went up to the bed of the pretended sick man, and said—

"Well, my friend, how are you?"

No answer.

"You wish to speak with me alone?"

No answer.

"You cannot answer me, you are so weak? Let me feel your pulse." He took up the hand and felt that it was icy cold.

"Oh, my good people, you have fetched me too late!" cried the priest: "the man is already quite dead! What is this?" he exclaimed, when he saw the soldiers who came forward at these words. "You are seeking for my life! You have deceived me: may God pardon you for it!"

"No, no, pardon me, M. le Curé, we are not seeking for your life," cried one of the soldiers, falling on his knees before the priest. "This, indeed, was our evil intention, but we now confess that there is a God Who punishes blasphemy. This man was a few minutes ago in perfect health, and was laughing with us. From the moment that he heard your step he did not give a sign of life."

Who cannot help shuddering at this proof of the power of God, Who is provoked by the wicked every day? Till the year 1846 the priest was still living in Conches.

As the object of this sermon is to try and set everybody against swearing, I cannot close it better than by a good story which I have heard told.

"I remember some years ago I used to hold open-air meetings out in

Illinois. In the summer evenings great crowds used to come out, and I noticed at one of the meetings a gentleman sitting in his carriage, which was on the outskirts of the assembly, and he had a cigar in his mouth. And again the next morning he was there; and again the next evening. After the preaching was over he always used to drive right away. One time I saw him take a great interest in what was said, and after a while I saw tears trickling down his cheeks. I made inquiries about him, and they told me who he was. I said to them I must go and see him some day. They laughed. 'Why you don't know the man as well as we do. You have no idea of the ridicule he has made use of with respect to these meetings, and the lies he has told about you all around the town.' And they gave me his history. They said he was a man of large wealth, had a fine house, and had everything to make life pleasant to him, but he was a very profane, godless man. He would curse everything and everybody. Even the wife of his bosom had curses showered down upon her, and his children used to be witnesses of his frightful oaths. One day I set out to go and see him. I was near his house when he stepped out of the front door. I stepped up—'This is Mr P., I believe?'

"'Yes, sir,' in a gruff, unwelcome voice, 'that is my name; what do you want?'

"He knew very well who I was; he mistrusted what I wanted. 'I would like to ask you a question,' I replied.

"'Well, what is it?'"

"'I am told,' I said, 'that you are rich, that God has blessed you with great wealth, that you have a beautiful wife and lovely children, and I just want to know why you treat God in the way you do?' The tears came out of his eyes, and he said, 'Come in, come in.' So I entered, and he told me that he had tried a thousand times to stop swearing, but he couldn't. I told him to trust to Jesus and He would stop it for him—that's what He came into the world to do; and the result was he let Christ take the burden. He confessed his sin, had the prayers of all the Christians round about, and in a year he became one of the elders of the church."—*Rev. J. N. Norton.*

The Voice Within

"*A good conscience.*"—1 *Tim i.* 19.
"*A bad conscience.*"—*Heb. x.* 22.

In an evil world like this, we need all the help we can get, to enable us first to find out the right way and then to walk in it. Some of us have had wise and loving fathers and mothers and other friends, who have done much for us, in pointing out the way, guiding and encouraging us to walk in it, protecting us from dangers and keeping us from mistakes into which, but for them, we should certainly have fallen. And if we had them always at our side, we think we might manage in some way to get along. But we cannot have them always with us, and even if we had, there are things which they cannot see and in which they could not help us. We must judge for ourselves and act for ourselves. We soon enough get to be the men and women, which so many young people wish and weary to be, and we must then do the best we can for ourselves. We have, indeed, the Word of God, the blessed Bible, to shed light upon our path. We can carry our difficulties to *it*, and put questions to *it*, such as no other can answer. And yet we cannot have the Bible always in our hands, and even though we had it all committed to memory, it would not altogether serve the purpose. We want something *nearer to us* than any *book*, or any *friend*—which we can carry about with us wherever we go—which there is no danger of our forgetting

or leaving behind us. We want a light *within*. And we have such a light. Each of us has it. It is always there, whether we attend to it or not; and if we deal with it as we ought, it will generally guide us aright.

I wish to say a few words to you now about *Conscience*. Some of you may not understand very well about the word, but you all know the thing. There are two great words with which we have to do, every hour of our lives, and with which all our happiness and welfare are wrapped up—*Right* and *Wrong*. Conscience has to do with these, telling us about them, and telling us about ourselves in connection with them. There are three remarks under which I may arrange what I have to say about Conscience: *What it is—what it may be—what it leads to.*

I. WHAT IT IS.—There are three characters in which we shall look at it. 1. *Conscience as a guide*—a guide as to what is *right* and what is *wrong*. When you are going to do a thing, it is as if a voice within said to you, "That is right," or "That is wrong"; in the one case, adding, "You may do it," or "You should do it," and in the other, "You must not do it." It is just something like what you find in connection with certain things of a different kind. If you were going to step into deep water, if you were going to walk out at an open window, two or three stories from the ground—if you were going to put your hand into the fire or into a pail of boiling water—if you were going to drink a mixture from a phial that had "*Poison*" marked on it, it would be as if something within you said "*Don't!*"—as if something laid hold of you to keep you back. If anyone were to ask you, "How did you *not* do it?" you would very likely say, "Well, I can hardly tell you. It was just a kind of *instinct. I felt* I should not do it." Now, in a somewhat similar way, we have got that within us, which tells us we should not do certain things, not merely because they would hurt us, but because, however pleasant they might be at the moment, or however they might be thought to benefit us in some ways—they are *wrong*. You are tempted to do some forbidden thing, and though there is no human eye to see you and nobody may ever know of it, the voice within says, "Don't; it is wrong!" You are tempted to take something which does not belong to you, but which you have very much desired to have—money, a pencil, or knife, or something of that kind, and the voice says, "Don't; it is *wrong!*" You are tempted to say what is not true, in order to escape punishment for a fault, or to get some reward to which you have no right—to copy at school, to take advantage of a class-fellow, to do what is unfair at your play, to speak some word which you would be ashamed that your mother, or any friend whom you respect should hear—to do some underhand or dishonourable thing which you have promised *not* to do, such as writing letters of an improper kind or reading books of a doubtful character; and the voice says, "Don't; it is *wrong!*" You all know about this. It has happened to you a hundred times.

Now, what is it that thus speaks? It is *Conscience*. It is a kind of instinct or *sense* which God has implanted in your nature for your guidance, telling what would hurt your *soul*, just as the other thing I spoke of would hurt your *body*. It has sometimes been spoken of as "*the voice of God* in the soul." That is only true so far. It is not *always* right in what it says. There is such a thing as *an ignorant conscience—an enlightened conscience*. Thus Paul's conscience led him to persecute the followers of Jesus—to hale them to prison and put them to death. He says, "I verily thought within myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." And other people have often done very wrong things, at the bidding of their conscience. And so conscience needs to be *instructed*,

taught, enlightened. And if you ask me who is to teach conscience, I answer —God. The great instructor of conscience is *the Word of God.* It is with conscience as with a ship's compass, by which the helmsman steers the vessel's course. In a general way, these may be depended on; the needle points to the north with more or less of steadiness. But now and then there are slight deviations, and whenever the ship comes into port, her compass has to be adjusted. So with conscience. We need to be constantly bringing it to the Word, to have it put right and kept right. Whenever it differs from the Word, conscience is *wrong.* Hence the need of making the Word our constant study, and seeking the teaching of the Holy Spirit that we may understand it and apply it aright. The more this is done, the more trustworthy will our conscience be. The more we have to do with God, and the more we study the character and life of Jesus, and keep up fellowship with Him, and have a desire to be like Him, the more likely will our conscience be to be a right and safe guide. It will then tell us truly about *sin* and *duty*, and be, as one has described it, "*a reflection of God's will.*"

Now, supposing you were in an unknown and dangerous region, where you were sure to miss your road, unless you had good guidance, where there were snares and pitfalls into which you might fall, where there were those who wished to lead you astray, and if possible to destroy you, how would you do with your guide? Would you not be asking him at every turn, "Which is the right way? Where should I go? Will it be safe to take this road? Where does it lead to?" Would you not get him to go before you, and follow as close to him as possible, at very dangerous places, planting your feet in the very marks which he pointed out to you? Would you not say, "I have the guide for the very purpose: otherwise, I might as well not have had him?" Would you ever think of trying to put out his eyes, or to blindfold him, to drug him, and get him to fall asleep, so as to unfit him for his work, or compel him to be silent? Would you be angry with him because he told you which was the right road, and showed you the danger of taking any other? Would you treat him with neglect and pay no attention to what he said, whenever his way differed from the way you wished to take? If you wished to get some beautiful flowers, or to catch a bright-coloured butterfly, or to rob a bird's nest on some dangerous cliff, would you disregard him, and evil entreat him, if he tried to save you from what might be death to you?

And yet is not that just what some of you do to your consciences? You pay no attention to them. They speak to you in vain. You will not follow their leading. You seek to silence them, to drown their voice, so that you might as well have *no conscience* at all. None ever needed a guide more than you; none ever needed to listen more carefully to the guide's voice. And yet you put your fingers in your ears and will not hear. A friend told me of a young man who had been well brought up, but who became a Sabbath-breaker, and regardless of all that was good. He used to set out on the Sabbath mornings to walk in the fields and to bathe in a neighbouring river. Sometimes when he was at the river-side, the church bell, which used to call him to the house of God began to ring. He could not bear to hear it, and used to undress as fast as he could, plunge into the river, and keep his head under water as long as he was able to hear it, that he might not hear the sound that told him of his duty and of his sin. It was *conscience* that was speaking to him, but, foolish lad that he was, he would not hear. He would not follow the leading of his guide.

I have heard of a boy who was sent to a shop to buy a parcel of sugar. As he was on his way home, he was seen to come to a stand in the village

street, look at the parcel that was under his arm, put his finger into his mouth and wet it, as if he were going to rub a little hole in the paper and just *taste* what was inside. And then, all of a sudden, as if someone had spoken to him, he withdrew his finger, put the parcel firmly under his arm, took to his heels, and never drew breath till he was home and had given the parcel into his mother's hands. What had happened? Who had spoken to him? It was *conscience*, acting as his guide, telling him he was about to do what was *wrong*. And he followed his guide and escaped the danger.

And so your safety lies in listening to conscience, whether it whisper gently or thunder terribly. Whatever it may cost you, let your resolution be, "I must hear what my guide says. I must follow my guide." Nothing could be more foolish or dangerous than to disregard it. It is as foolish and dangerous as for the engine-driver on an express train to disregard the danger-signals which tell that the road is impassable, or for the helmsman on board ship to pay no attention to the man on the look-out, when he tells that another ship lies across the vessel's course, or that the vessel is close upon the rocks.

II. Conscience as a Judge.—It is more than a *guide*, however important that may be. It not only tells what is right and what is wrong, but it acts the part of a judge, and the instant a thing is done, it *tries* the doer of it, and approves or condemns him. There are some trials, in courts of justice, which are very long and tedious, and in which it is very difficult to get at the truth. The evidence is often contradictory. One witness says one thing, and another says another, so that the judge does not know what to do. Sometimes he acquits the guilty. Sometimes, when there is a want of proof, the verdict is "not proven," and the criminal escapes. Does it ever occur to you that a process of this kind is going on every day, in the case of each of you? Each of you may be said to carry about a court of justice in his own breast. There is no need of witnesses. There is no need of a jury to sift the evidence. All that is wanted is *a judge*, to pronounce at once on each action, as soon as it is done, giving it its character, as good or bad, and passing sentence on him who did it.

How do you generally feel when you have done anything which you know to be wrong? Why do you look so sad? Why are you so unhappy? Why do you seem so absent, in some company in which you should have been full of spirit and glee? Why is there such a burden on your heart? Someone asks if you are ill; another asks if anyone has been annoying you. What is the matter? *Conscience has been judging you—condemning you.* Nobody saw the evil deed done. Nobody knew of it. No one accused you. No one said you had done wrong. You stood as a criminal at the bar of your own conscience—there was no denying the wrong done, and the judge condemned you. And how long did it take? It was all the work of a moment. And you left the bar *condemned—self-condemned.* That is what is the matter with you.

And when you have done right, conscience approves—it says, "Well done!" and, next to God's approval, nothing in all the world is so much worth having as this—the approval of your own conscience. Others may condemn you and think or speak ill of you, but that matters little if your own conscience approves. But when it cries "Shame!" it matters not though all the world should approve. No one can pass such a sentence upon you as that which you pass upon yourselves.

It is not difficult to account for the unhappiness of some people—their uneasiness, their unsettledness, the shifts to which they have recourse to drown thought. It is *conscience acting as judge.* God has appointed con-

science in each of us for this very purpose—to do this very work—to act as His representative. We speak about "the judgment" as *future*—as all *to come*. The truth is, *the judgment is going on now*—every day, all day long. We are *judging ourselves*. And when the great Judgment Day shall come, the result will only need to be declared. O take care how you treat this judge, how you deal with his sentences, how you behave after he has condemned you. I shall speak, by and by, of the way in which pardon and peace, in such a case, are to be found.

III. Conscience as a Recorder and Remembrancer.—In courts of law, when sentences are passed, they are recorded, and stand against the guilty person. It is the work of the clerk of court to see to this. Now, conscience does *this* also. It *remembers*—it *records*—*it brings to mind*, the evil we have done. It does not need to be written down on paper with pen and ink. It is written down the moment it is done, on the tablets of the heart, and laid past to be ready for after use. Who shall tell what a memory conscience has, how long and accurately and minutely it remembers, and how faithfully and fully it will bring all up again, perhaps thirty or forty or fifty years after, as if the thing had happened yesterday? The fact that you have forgotten it meanwhile, does not matter in the least. It is all written down, ready to be recalled, whenever occasion arises. It is like documents written with a certain kind of ink. As soon as the ink is dry, the writing becomes invisible. When you look at it, you see nothing but a sheet of clean paper. But hold it before the fire, and in a moment it starts out, as if by magic, every letter of it distinct.

You recollect how it was with King Herod. He had beheaded John the Baptist, because he reproved him for his sin. And when Jesus appeared, a Mighty Prophet and Worker of miracles, and everyone wondered Who this remarkable Man could be, and some said one thing and some another, Herod, when he heard of Him, said, "It is John the Baptist, whom I beheaded." In a moment the picture of the murdered man started up before him. "But how can it be he? Is he not dead and buried?" "He is risen from the dead!" said the king. Others might have forgotten all about the evil deed, but Herod's conscience had kept the record.

You remember the story of the boy and the grapes—how he selfishly and greedily stole the grapes brought by a friend to a little invalid sister, as they lay on the table at her bedside. And there the matter seemed to begin and end. If there had been no conscience, it might have been so. But conscience had recorded it too faithfully to admit of that. The boy became a man. He was crossing the ocean, his vessel was wrecked, and he went down into the trough of the sea and gave himself up for lost. Wonderfully he came to the surface again and was saved. And what were his thoughts when he was so near the eternal world? The past all seemed to come anew before him, and that mean action of his boyhood—conscience held it up before him, and the voice within asked, "Who stole sister's grapes?" He needed no remembrancer, no accuser but *himself*.

We are told of a jeweller travelling with his servant, carrying a large amount of property, in jewels and money, with him. At a lonely part of the road, the servant drew a pistol from his master's saddle and shot him dead, threw his body, with a heavy stone fatsened to it, into a neighbouring canal, and made off with his booty to a distant part of the country. There he began business in a small way, doing everything in such a manner as to furnish no trace of the terrible deed. He grew in wealth and in public esteem, entering into family life, and at length becoming chief magistrate of the place. No one knew of his guilt. Dead men tell no tales, and it seemed

as if he should carry the secret to his grave. But a case comes up in which a servant is accused of having murdered his master. Witnesses are brought forward, the crime is proved, and it only remains that sentence of death should be pronounced. The man of whom I am speaking, is president of the court. It falls to him to pass sentence upon the murderer, when to the amazement of the onlookers, he rises from his chair, comes down from the bench, takes his place beside the criminal at the bar, tells out the story of his own crime, and demands that justice shall take its course. It just needed such an event to bring all to mind, to loosen the tongue of conscience, and leave the man no choice but to publish the secret to the world.

Sometimes you hear of *conscience-money*. The country is defrauded by someone who has not paid his fair share of the taxes levied by the Government. He has made a false return of his income, or he has smuggled some forbidden goods, or he has not paid the tax for his dog, or otherwise he has withheld what he knew to be due. Perhaps he thinks he has done a clever thing. But again and again it comes up. He thinks of it when he is alone. He dreams about it when he is asleep. It is an unjust and dishonourable thing, and it so haunts him that he can find no relief, till he returns the ill-saved money. When you see acknowledgments of "conscience-money" in the newspapers, that is what is meant.

Not long ago you might have seen, what I suppose is to be seen to-day, an unused postage-stamp in the crown of a gentleman's hat. A friend of mine who noticed it day after day, in a house in which he was staying, had his curiosity aroused, and at length asked what was the meaning of it, and was told that many years ago—twenty-five or thirty, I think he said—when the gentleman was in business, he gave one of his customers, who was paying an account, five shillings too much in the way of change. All these years passed away, and not long ago he received a letter mentioning the fact, and telling that on the occasion of a revival in the city where he lived, the dishonest customer had been awakened and brought to Christ, conscience had brought up the remembrance of the wrong, and demanded of the new convert that restitution should be made. The sum due was enclosed in postage-stamps. All the stamps but one were used in the ordinary way, and that one was stuck in the crown of the hat, as a reminder of the power of conscience in a day of awakening. I might tell you of many such things within my own knowledge, where conscience has brought back the recollection of things long forgotten.

It may be easy enough just now, to make light of the faults and sins of youth, turning them into an occasion of amusement, perhaps boasting of them, and then dismissing them from the mind, and feeling no further concern. And yet the record of each of them remains, to come up some other day, with no possibility of denying them, and with nothing to say in excuse; the only choice in such a case being to take the accusing conscience to Jesus that, by the sprinkling of His blood, He may satisfy and silence it, or to bear the penalty throughout a lost eternity.

Sometimes, I dare say, you wonder what *hell* is. The word spoken to one who was there, has come to us: "Son, *remember*." The workings of a guilty conscience, an unsprinkled conscience, its remembrance of past sins and its terrible upbraidings, even as felt now and here, give us some idea of the state of those who have refused the only Saviour and trampled on His cleansing blood, and are now among the lost.

I do not know anything, except the love of Christ, that is more fitted to keep us from thinking lightly of sin and indulging in it, than the thought of *the record* that is kept of it by our own consciences, and the certainty that it

will all be brought up another day, unless washed away in the atoning blood of Jesus.

Beware of running in the face of conscience—of tampering with conscience. There is nothing you have such cause to fear. There is no sacrifice, no self-denial, no reproach, no loss or suffering, which you had not better meet, than do anything which conscience tells you is wrong. What is any present pleasure, or gratification, or gain, in view of what must inevitably follow?

An eminent lawyer, who afterwards became Lord Chancellor of England, made a statement on this subject, which has often been quoted, and which I especially commend to the notice of older boys: "It was the first command and counsel of my youth *always to do what my conscience told me to be my duty, and leave the consequences to God.* I have hitherto followed it, and have no reason to complain that my obedience to it has been even a temporary sacrifice. I have found it, on the contrary, the road to prosperity and wealth, and I shall point it out as such to my children."

—*Rev. J. H. Wilson, D.D.*

A Rare Kind of Courage

"*I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.*"—*Ps. xxiii.* 4.

David, who wrote and sung these words, had many kinds of courage. When he was a shepherd-boy, a lion came one day prowling toward the sheep, and when he got near enough he sprang and seized a lamb of his flock. David fearlessly ran after the lion, and caught him by the beard and struck him again and again with his shepherd's club until he had killed him. He did it all so quickly that the lamb was saved alive. Another time he served a bear the same way. After such fights he would take his harp and sing: "The Lord is my Shepherd . . . I will fear no evil." After that, when David was about seventeen, he fought the great giant Goliath. He was not afraid, because he knew God was with him, and would not let him die unless it was time for him to go home to Heaven. When Saul made David a general, he fought so bravely that when he came back from battle the women took their tambourines and sang his praises on the streets.

Then when the wicked King Saul got envious of his popularity, and drove him away into the wilderness to hide in the caves and save his life, still he did not get discouraged. "David encouraged himself in God." Many people who are brave in battle are not brave about bearing troubles, losing money and health and friends; but even in caves and woods where David was hiding for his life with not much to eat and not very good clothes to wear, and in danger of being killed, he would take his harp and sing, "The Lord is my Shepherd: I will fear no evil."

One thing that kept up his courage was believing God's promise that he was to be crowned by and by. He remembered one day when he was a shepherd-boy that a minister came and poured some sweet perfume on his head and anointed him, and told him that God had promised that he should by and by be a king over the land of Palestine. He believed God's promise and so didn't mind living in caves for a while when he was sure of a king's palace by and by. So we ought to be encouraged when we are in trouble by remembering that when we are converted, God's Holy Spirit, like sweet perfume, anoints our hearts to be kings by and by in Heaven. We ought not to mind living in poverty and trouble for a while, when we are going to have a mansion and a crown at last.

A little girl was going home one evening with her father, and on the

road there was a rapid stream to cross; over it was thrown a single board, hardly broad enough for one to cross with ease or safety. On reaching the edge of this impromptu bridge her father said to her: "Come, my child, let me take your hand, and walk after me." When they had reached the other side quite safely, he looked down and asked, "Weren't you afraid when you were crossing over, with the water running away under you?"

"Oh, no, father," she replied, "how could I be afraid while you were holding my hand?"

And this is just the way we must trust our Heavenly Father; let Him hold our hands, and not think whether we are holding on tightly enough, if we are to pass safely over the hills and plains and valleys which lie between us and the King's palace.

David was brave in fighting bears, and lions, and giants, and armies; and he was brave in bearing slanders and troubles—the courage of trust. And now I want to tell you of a still more beautiful kind of courage that he had—courage to obey God, in forgiving and sparing his enemies when others sneered at him and told him to kill them. He was so kind to those who wronged him that one of his fighting friends used to say tauntingly: "Thou lovest thine enemies." That is just what God tells us to do, and just what David did.

One day when David and his friends were hiding in the sides of a dark cave in the mountains, King Saul and his soldiers, who were trying to find David, came into the cave, not knowing that David was there. David's friends saw the wicked king coming, and they said to David: "Now is your chance to kill Saul, who has been trying to kill you so long. You can see him, but he can't see you. He don't even guess that you are here. Watch your chance and cut off his head."

When Saul came near, David raised his sword behind King Saul and cut off—a piece of Saul's robe, so quietly that the king didn't know it. David wouldn't let any of his friends strike Saul with their swords, for he forgave him in his heart, and pitied him for doing wrong, because when anyone does wrong they hurt themselves more than anyone else. When the king had gone out of the cave and a little way off, David came out and halloed to Saul and held up a piece of his skirt he had cut off, to show Saul that he might have cut off his head. Then he said: "Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt?" After so much kindness, Saul again tried to kill David, and again David spared his life when he found him asleep. He took Saul's spear and climbed a mountain, and shouted for Saul to wake up and see that he had been spared again. All David's friends wanted him to kill Saul both times, and made fun of him for being so merciful, but David had courage to do right in spite of ridicule. Are you brave enough to fight down anger and hatred in your heart, and forgive those who have wronged you, as God forgives us for wronging Him?

"Be brave to do the right,
And scorn to be untrue,
When fear would whisper, 'yield,'
Ask—'What would Jesus do?'"

The King in His Beauty

"*Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty.*"—*Isa. xxxiii.* 17.

The King here spoken of is Jesus. This promise refers to Heaven. There will be a variety of glorious things for us to see when we get to

Heaven. But the grandest, the most beautiful of all, will be to see Jesus Himself. The Apostle John says, that "there we shall see Him as He is." It must have been a blessed thing to see Jesus when He was on earth; but that was nothing compared to what it will be to see Him in Heaven. When Jesus was here in this world, we have no reason to suppose He was remarkable for the beauty of His appearance. We are not told, indeed, by the good men who wrote His life in the Gospels, how He looked. The prophet Isaiah is the only one of the sacred writers who has given any particular account of His appearance, "When Jesus was seen among men." And he speaks of Him as "a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, with no form of comeliness, and no beauty that we should desire Him" (Isa. liii. 2, 3).

But it will be very different when we come to see Jesus in Heaven. There will be wonderful beauty and glory about Him there. And those who love and serve Him here will see all this beauty and glory there. Jesus prayed for this very thing when He was here on earth. In the seventeenth chapter of John's Gospel, we have, all written out for us, the great prayer which Jesus offered for His people just before He went to be crucified. In the twenty-fourth verse of that chapter we have these wonderful words: "Father, I will that they also whom Thou has given Me be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me." These words of Jesus in His prayer give us the best explanation we can have of the meaning of the prophet Isaiah when he wrote the sweet promise we are considering, "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty." If you ask me to tell you what His promise means? I would answer the question by turning to the words of Jesus in His prayer, "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me when I come, that they may behold My glory."

The King spoken of in one of these passages is Jesus, Who is speaking Himself in the other passage. The "beauty" that Isaiah speaks of is the same thing as the "glory" that Jesus prays about. Isaiah calls it "the King's beauty"; Jesus calls it "My glory." Isaiah does not tell us where this beauty was to be seen, but Jesus tells us. He says it will be—"where I am." And we know very well where Jesus is. Jesus is in Heaven, Heaven, and everyone who loves Jesus can look up to Him and say:

> "'Tis where Thou art is Heaven to me,
> And Heaven without Thee cannot be."

And so these words of Isaiah lead our thoughts up to Heaven. "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty." We all hope to go to Heaven when we die. If we really love and serve Jesus we certainly shall go there. And so we should be interested in learning about what we are to see when we get there. God has not told us much about Heaven. We should try to understand all that He has told us. The Apostle Paul was taken to Heaven before he died, and then came back again to earth. He saw "the King in His beauty" then, but he never told about it. He said he was not allowed to tell what he had seen (2 Cor. xii. 14).

And so we can only learn about Heaven by studying what God has told us of it in His Blessed Word. This passage in Isaiah is one of the places in which it is spoken about.

And when we come to think of the beauty or glory of Jesus in Heaven, the place itself is one thing that will have much to do with His beauty. We call that place Heaven. In the Bible it is compared to different

things. Sometimes it is spoken of as a paradise or garden full of all bright and beautiful things. When Adam and Eve were first created, you know that God put them in such a garden or paradise. In that garden we are told that God made to grow everything that was pleasant to the eye and good for food. And we know that they would have been perfectly happy there if they had only minded what God told them. But Satan got in there, in the form of a serpent, and tempted them to eat of the tree of which God had said they must not eat, and then they were driven out. In this way Paradise was lost. But Jesus came to restore it to us. And Heaven is compared to a garden, because it will in some respects be like the Garden of Eden. It will be a "Paradise" restored. But it will be better than that first Paradise, because Satan will never be allowed to get in and tempt us. And we shall never sin, and never be put out of it. Heaven is spoken of as a paradise in 2 Cor. xii. 2-4 and Rev. ii. 7.

Sometimes Heaven is spoken of in the Bible as "a country." Paul calls it "a better country," that is, a "Heavenly" (Heb. ii. 16). The original word here means a fatherland. Canaan, you know, was the land or country promised to the Jews. And while they were toiling in Egypt, or travelling through the wilderness, it was the thought of that blessed country, that promised land, that cheered and comforted them. That was a beautiful country. God called it a "land flowing with milk and honey." He said it was "a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat and honey, and vines and fig-trees and pomegranates, a land of oil, olive and honey; a land where they should eat bread and not lack anything; a land whose stones were iron, and out of whose hills they might dig brass." And so this land of Canaan was one of God's types or figures of Heaven. And when we read in the Bible about the fertility and glory of that land, it should lead us to think of Heaven, the place where Jesus is, and where "our eyes shall see the King in His beauty."

Sometimes Heaven is spoken of in the Bible as "a Kingdom where all is righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xiv. 17). Sometimes it is spoken of as a Temple, in which all God's people shall worship and serve Him day and night, without ever feeling weary (Rev. iii. 12; iv. 8). Sometimes it is spoken of as a building or house, in which all who love God will be brought together as one great family, all knowing and loving one another, and perfectly happy in being with Jesus where He is, and seeing the "King in His beauty." This is the way in which Jesus Himself spoke of Heaven when He said: "In My Father's house are many mansions" (John xiv. 2).

But the fullest description we have in the Bible of Heaven, the place where Jesus is, is when it is compared to a city. In one place it is called "a continuing city" (Heb. xiii. 14). In another place it is spoken of as "a city that hath foundations, Whose Builder and Maker is God" (Heb. xi. 10). But it is in the last two chapters of the Bible that we have the fullest description of Heaven. And there it is represented as a city. But it is the most beautiful city that any eye has ever seen, or any ear has ever heard of, or any mind has ever thought of.

We see a great many beautiful things in this world of ours. A day in spring is beautiful, when the leaves are bursting open and the flowers are coming out, and the birds are singing, and the air is balmy, and the sun is bright; yes, a day in spring is beautiful. The rising sun is beautiful, and so is the setting sun. A moonlight night is beautiful. Our world is full of beauty. But if God can afford to make this world so beautiful, how

beautiful must be the palace in which His Son is to reign as King, and where His own dear children are to live for ever? When the Psalmist is speaking of this palace, he says, "the perfection of beauty" is there (Ps. l. 2). There is no perfection of beauty in this world. Here the ripest fruit has a rotten speck in it. The sweetest rose has a thorn on the stem or a worm at the heart of it. The brightest sky has a cloud upon its surface, and the sun itself has dark spots on its face. There is something to mar the beauty of all our brightest things in this world. But in that world, that city, that place where Jesus is, there will be nothing to mar the beauty that is seen everywhere. It will all be "the perfection of beauty."

Then the company about Jesus there will have much to do with the beauty we shall see in Him.

However beautiful the place may be which is to be our Heaven, we never could be satisfied with that alone. Jewelled walls, and pearly gates, and golden streets are all very well. They must be wonderfully beautiful. But these, of themselves, could never make us happy. When we go to the house we live in, and which we call home, what is it that makes it feel so sweet and pleasant to us? It is not the walls of the building, but it is the presence there of a dear father or mother, of brothers and sisters, of those whom we love and who we know do love us. And so it will be with Heaven.

And now let us talk a little about the company we shall meet in Heaven. Who will make up this company? Well, to begin with, the Angels will form a part of this company. We are told in the Bible that there will be in Heaven "an innumerable company of Angels" (Heb. xii. 22). I never saw an Angel. You never saw an Angel. No doubt that any of us would feel frightened if we should see an Angel come into the room where we were. But we know from what the Bible tells us that the Angels are very beautiful. They are always spoken of as clothed in white. They are sometimes spoken of as having wings, but not always. And to see such a beautiful place as Heaven filled with such beautiful beings as Angels are, must help to make it very beautiful.

But now, I think I hear one of you say: "Ah! yes; the Angels I dare say are very beautiful; but then I don't know them, and they don't know me. I should be afraid of them. I don't think I could feel at home or happy with them."

This is very natural. And if there were to be none but Angels in the company of Heaven, it would not feel very much like home to us. But there will be others in Heaven beside the Angels. Abraham will be there, and so will Joseph, and David, and Daniel, and Peter, and John, and Paul, and all the good people who have died since will be there too.

But then the company of Heaven comes nearer to us even than this. I suppose there is not one person who may read this sermon but who has some friend or relative in Heaven. Have you lost a beloved father or mother, or uncle or aunt, who loved Jesus? You will find them in Heaven. Have you lost a dear mother, or a sister old enough to love and serve Jesus? You will find them in Heaven. Hear what an aged minister once said on this very point: "When I was a boy I used to think of Heaven as a glorious golden city, with nobody in it but the Angels, and they were all strangers to me. But after a while my little brother died; then I thought of Heaven as that great city full of Angels, with just one little fellow in it that I was acquainted with. He was the only one I knew there at the time. Then another brother died, and there were two in Heaven that I knew. Then my acquaintances began to die, and the number of my friends in Heaven grew larger all the time. But it was not till one of my little ones was taken

that I began to feel that I had a personal interest in Heaven. Then a second went, and a third, and a fourth; and so many of my friends and loved ones have gone there that it seems as if I know more of Heaven than I do of earth. And now, when my thoughts turn to Heaven, it is not the gold and the jewels and the pearls that I think of, but the loved ones there. It is not the place as much as the company that makes Heaven seem beautiful.

Some people think that when children die and go to Heaven they do not grow up to be men and women, but that they always remain children. I am not able to say for certain that this is so, because God has not told us about it, and no one can tell us for Him. But I hope it may be so. For I do love children so much that I should like to think that there will always be children in Heaven. But if they all grow up to be men and women, by and by there will be no children there, and this, it seems to me, would not be so pleasant.

If you go into a garden, you never find all the flowers in full bloom at the same time. Instead of this, you will find mingled with the full-blown flowers some buds half-opened, and others just beginning to open. And this variety adds much to the beauty of the garden. Heaven is God's garden. Christian men and women will be the full-blown flowers in that garden; and children will be the buds.

But this company in Heaven will be all good, and kind, and holy. They will be all "made perfect." Here in this world we have no perfect children, and no perfect men and women. But we shall all be perfect there. There will be none blind, or deaf, or lame, or sick in Heaven. There will be none cross, or proud, or sinful in Heaven. There will be no ugliness of any kind in Heaven. There will be perfect beauty in the place and perfect beauty in the company there. And they will all know and love one another there. No one will feel a stranger or alone in Heaven. It is a very painful feeling we have when we feel ourselves alone and unknown among strangers.

In the early settlement of the city of Cincinnati, there was only one way for persons to get there, and that was by the means of the flat-boats that passed up and down the river.

On one occasion a boat landed there. It had come down the river from Pittsburg. There was a company of people on board that boat who were going to Cincinnati to live there. Their friends were expecting their arrival, and had met down by the side of the river to welcome them. As they left the boat their friends gathered round them to shake hands with them and give them the warmest kind of a greeting.

But in that company who had just arrived there was one who was a stranger. He had no friends or anyone that knew him in Cincinnati. There was no one there to shake hands with him, or bid him welcome to the place. He had been feeling lonely before; he felt ten times more so now.

The crowd was beginning to scatter leaving that stranger alone on the boat. Leaning over the railing of the boat, he called after them, saying: "Friends, if there are any of you who love the Lord Jesus Christ, I am your brother."

In a moment half a dozen of them were at his side. They shook him warmly by the hand and bade him welcome to their houses.

How different Cincinnati seemed to that stranger now from what it did a moment before! The place, indeed, was the same, but, oh! how different the company seemed! He was among friends now, and that made him feel at home.

And so it will be with us when we get to Heaven. Jesus will know and love everyone who enters there. He will introduce us to those who are there before, and they will all love us because we love Jesus. Angels and

Christians, old men and young men, women and children, will all make one happy family.

"Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty." There will be beauty in the place and beauty in the company.

But there is a third thing that will have more to do with the beauty of Heaven than either the place or the company, and that is the Person and Presence of Jesus.

But what shall I say about this part of our subject? It is easy enough to talk about the place where Heaven is to be. It is easy enough, too, to talk about the company that will be there; but when we come to think about the Person and Presence of Jesus in Heaven, who is able to speak on such a subject?

There was a celebrated painter once who was making a picture of Jesus in the midst of His twelve Apostles. In arranging the picture He concluded to paint the Apostles first, and not begin with their Master till he had finished them. As he went on with the picture, he tried to do the very best he could with each of the Apostles. He took the greatest pains with their figures, their positions, their dress, and their faces. As he went on with his work, he was very well pleased with it. After finishing the Apostles, he began with the person of Jesus. He got on very well with this till he came to the head and face of our Blessed Lord. Then he laid down his brush, and paused. He felt that the face of Jesus ought to be made to appear as much more beautiful than His disciples as the sun is more glorious than the stars. But how could he do this? He had tried so hard to make the disciples look well, that he felt he had no power left to make their Master appear as much superior to them as He ought to appear. And so he finished the person of Jesus all but the head, and then painted Him with a white mantle thrown over His head. He thought that when persons came to look at his painting, they would imagine what the face of Jesus ought to be, better than he could represent it by painting.

And I feel very much as that painter did when I come to speak about the Person and Presence of Jesus in Heaven. All who love Jesus here on earth agree in saying, that from what they know of Him now, He is "the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely." Then how will He appear when our eyes come to see "the King in His beauty" in Heaven? Just look, for a moment, how some good Christian men have written about Jesus, from what they knew of Him in this world.

When the Rev. John Newton was thinking of Him, he said:

"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ear;
It soothes his sorrow, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fear."

A good Catholic, who lived more than nine hundred years ago, expressed his feelings thus:

"Jesus, the very thought of Thee
With sweetness fills my breast;
But sweeter far Thy face to see,
And on Thy bosom rest.

Nor voice can sing nor heart can frame,
Nor can the memory find
A sweeter sound than Thy blest name,
O Saviour of mankind."

And Charles Wesley, when thinking about Him, burst out thus:

"O! for a thousand tongues to sing
My Great Redeemer's praise;
The glories of my God and King,
The triumphs of His grace.

Jesus, the name that calms our fears,
That bids our sorrows cease;
'Tis music to the sinner's ears,
'Tis life, and health, and peace."

When such men get to Heaven, it will not be the riches that adorn the place, not the perfection of the company there, that will make up its chief beauty to them. No! But it will be the Person and Presence of Jesus there that will constitute the charm, the glory, the fullness of Heaven's joy to their souls.

We have one description given us in the Bible of the Person and Presence of Jesus in Heaven. The Apostle John had a vision of Heaven. He saw "the King in His beauty," and this is what he says about it: "I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girded with a golden girdle. His head and His hair were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars; and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword; and His countenance was as the sun shining in His strength" (Rev. i. 12-16).

But then, in addition to this description, in another place we have an illustration of how the Person and Presence of Jesus will appear in Heaven. I refer here to the transfiguration of our Saviour. Here is Jesus on the top of Mount Tabor, if that was the place. His three disciples, Peter, John, and James, are with Him. They see a wondrous change take place in His appearance. He is transfigured before them. His raiment becomes exceeding white, as snow, a whiteness such as no dye in the world would impart. His countenance changes too, till it shines like the sun, and a glory is breaking around Him such as was never seen in the sun. Moses and Elias are seen there in glory too—and the voice of God is heard speaking. This transfiguration scene took place in order to give us an idea of what Heaven will be. Then our "eyes shall see the King in His beauty." We shall see Him as He appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration.

And then all the beauty that we see in this world around us is but a glimpse or reflection of the richer beauty that we shall see in Jesus in Heaven. The beauty of the sun, and stars, and light; the beauty of the sky, the clouds, the seasons; the beauty of mountains, hills, and plains; the beauty of birds, and beasts, and insects; the beauty of trees, and plants, and flowers; and all the beauty that we see everywhere, is only a shadow, or type, or reflection, of the beauty that we shall see in Jesus when we get to Heaven. We shall find the place glorious, and the company perfect; but the chief beauty and blessedness of Heaven will be in the Person and Presence of Jesus.

"Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty." Remember there are three things with which this beauty will be connected; these are, the place, the company, and the Person and Presence of Jesus.

There is one important lesson we should learn from this subject; it is

this: we must learn to love Jesus here, or else His Presence in Heaven will not make us happy.

We see this lesson illustrated in the Hindoo fable about the crane. The fable says, that one day a crane was contentedly eating snails in a marsh. As she was thus engaged, a bird flew down from the sky and lighted near her.

"Where do you come from?" asked the crane.

"From Heaven," was the answer.

"What have you seen in Heaven?" asked the crane.

"Everything that can make people happy." And then the bird went on and described some of the joys of that blessed place.

"Have they any snails in Heaven?" asked the crane—as much as to say, "I don't care to be in any place where there are no snails."

"You vulgar, low-bred creature!" said the bird, and flew away offended.

Now suppose that this crane had been taken to Heaven, would it have been happy there? Not at all. It would have been longing all the time for the marsh where it used to wade and catch snails. We must be prepared for Heaven, if we hope to be happy there. And there is only one true preparation; this is, learning to know and love Jesus. If we really love Him, we shall be perfectly happy to be where He is; and when our "eyes shall see the King in His beauty," that will satisfy us for ever. We shall want nothing else. That will be a perfect Heaven to us.—*Rev. Dr Newton.*

Swimming

Can you swim? I hope you can, for there is really no excuse nowadays for any English boy or girl who cannot swim. Even if you do not live by the sea, every town of any size has its swimming bath with an official instructor, and if you have confidence and perseverance it takes but a short time to learn. And if you do learn to swim, what a new world of enjoyment it opens out to you! What could be more glorious than a swim in the sea, or river, or pool, on a hot summer's day? It is one of the very best sports you can go in for, because it exercises every muscle in your body, and helps you to grow up fit and strong.

Now those of you who can swim know very well that it is one thing to swim with the stream, and quite another thing to swim against it. If you swim with the stream you are carried along almost without any effort on your part. But if you swim against the stream you have to exert all your strength if you are to make headway, and it is real hard work. In swimming, up stream, and down stream, make all the difference in the world. I expect you have taken a great deal of interest in the attempts that have been made during the past few years to swim the Channel, and were very glad when Burgess succeeded last summer. His success was the outcome of wonderful pluck, endurance, and determination. Beaten time and again, and year after year, he stuck to it, till at last he accomplished what he had determined to do. What was it that made the swimming of the Channel a seemingly impossible achievement? It was not the distance, though I dare say it must seem wonderful to you that anyone could swim so far, but it was the currents and cross-currents that were the greatest obstacles the swimmers had to contend with. Many and many a time when Burgess was well within sight of the French shore he was swept back, miles out of his course, by the strength of the current, and had to give up and begin all over again.

Now do you know, boys and girls, that this life of ours is very much like swimming the Channel, and we have to learn to live just as we have to learn to swim. That is why you go to school and have to do many things that seem

to you sometimes to be hard and difficult and unpleasant. You will discover the benefit of this training later on. You know it is not always pleasant learning to swim, you swallow such a lot of salt water, it gets into your mouth and nose and ears, and very often you sink or a wave breaks over you, and then there is such a splashing and spluttering and gasping for breath! But if you only stick at it for a few days you find yourself swimming almost before you realise it. And if you want to become a great and successful swimmer in the ocean of life, it will depend very largely on how you learn in the comparatively quiet and sheltered backwater of school and home.

And so I want to urge you to-day to begin early to swim against the current. You will have to meet fierce currents when you put out to sea and unless your moral and spiritual muscles have been trained and developed by hard swimming while you are young, you will be exposed to great danger when you are out in the open sea. There are many little currents and eddies in your life at school and every time you overcome them you are fitting yourself to withstand the stronger tides of manhood and womanhood. You know sometimes when boys get together one of them will suggest doing something mean, cruel, and wrong. You know it is a wicked thing to do but you don't want to look peculiar or be sneered at and you are sorely tempted to go with the others rather than risk losing a little popularity. If you do fall in with their proposal, you will be swimming with the stream, and your muscles will become weak and flabby, and you will be less strong to tackle the next current you meet. But if you resist, it will mean a hard bit of swimming against the stream, but you will be stronger than ever, and will be fitting yourself for overcoming greater currents when you become a man.

At one of our Public Schools the cricket eleven were holding a supper to celebrate a victory, and during the evening, one of the team sang a shameful song. But another member of the team immediately stood up before the whole crowd and protested. He said he could not remain in the room or in the team if that song were sung and the song was never finished. That was a bit of hard swimming up stream, and in after life that boy became a great hero, and eventually died a martyr's death out in the Mission Field.

Boys, it costs something to swim up stream, but nothing is worth anything that does not cost something. Ease is the way to disease. Struggle, toil, hardship and self-sacrifice are the things out of which character is hammered and forged. But we are not left to live our lives alone. It would be a poor lookout for most of us if we were. But in the struggle and conflict there comes to us all if we will but seek it, the gracious and loving companionship of One Who has been through it all before us and knows what it means. He has battled and struggled through all the waves and currents and cross-currents of "our life's wild restless sea," and to every lonely hard-pressed swimmer He can give the power to overcome. Seek this power, for as someone has truly said, "You cannot live without Him and be a man."—*Archibald Reith.*

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

The Collect

O GOD, Who knowest us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright; grant to us such strength and protection, as may support us in all dangers, and carry us through all temptations, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Collect, which is used on this day, was compiled in A.D. 1661, from a very ancient model. It mentions the "many and great dangers" which beset us during our earthly pilgrimage, and teaches us to pray for "such strength and protection as may support us in all dangers, and carry us through all temptations." The Gospel for the day brings before our notice "the dangers and temptations" which beset our Lord's disciples when they were in a ship on the Sea of Galilee. A tempest arose, "the ship was covered with the waves"; but Jesus was asleep. Like St Peter on another occasion, they thought that they were in *danger*, and were tempted by their own weak nature to believe that help was far off, and that they must perish. But Christ arose from His sleep, His voice was heard in the storm, and there was peace. Christ was the source of their safety then, and He is the source of our safety now.

Our Helpful King

"*Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you.*"—1 *Peter v.* 7.

Once upon a time, dear children, there lived in a far-away Eastern land a great king. In those good old times people did not go to the shops, as they do now, and purchase wonderful fabrics out of which to fashion their clothing; but each family spun and wove its own raiment. Now this king needed a large supply of cloth for the use of his family and his numerous retinue. So he sent out far and wide among his people costly materials which they were to weave into garments for his household; and patterns to show them how to fashion those garments. And the messengers who carried these materials were told to inform the people if they had any trouble with their work, if the thread tangled or the pattern puzzled them, to bring it directly to the palace and the king would himself see that everything should be made right for them. So the sound of the loom and the spinning wheel was soon heard throughout the length and breadth of the land.

But it was not long before the workers began to grow discouraged. One had sadly tangled the thread and could not possibly get it again into working order. Another had made a mistake in the pattern, and knew not know to set it right again. So everybody was full of groans and complaints, and almost ready to give up work. Only one little girl was there who did not seem to share in the general distress, but kept on working and singing at her work, seeming to be just as happy as she could be. So the neighbours came to her,

one after another, and asked her how it was that she could be so happy and get along with her work so pleasantly. "We are all discouraged," said they. "Everything is in a snarl, and we know not how to unravel it. Tell us your secret." "Why," said she, "I have no secret. I only do just what the king told me to do. When my work troubles me I take it to him and he sets everything right, as he said he would. So I have nothing to distress me. I am happy all the time."

Now, dear children, is it not very easy to see the meaning of this simple allegory? Are we not all weaving for the King; weaving lives which He has told us to keep "unspotted from the world"? And do not the threads tangle every day? Sometimes the lessons go wrong; sometimes the temper gets the mastery, and harsh, angry words spring to your lips. Do not utter them. Just stop and ask the Great King, our Heavenly Father, to help you overcome these wicked feelings, and He will certainly do so.

Perhaps you are sometimes tempted to do some very wrong thing—to take something which does not belong to you, or to screen yourself from blame by a falsehood; sorely tempted, almost ready to yield. Stop; before the thread becomes hopelessly tangled, call upon the King for help; He will never fail you.

Again, it may be that you are struggling with the burden of sorrow. You may have stood by the open grave and taken the last, long look at the pale face of father or mother now buried from your sight. Looking up to you there may be younger brothers and sisters; and, as you think of all this, your grief overwhelms you. You say, as did the Psalmist, "All Thy waves and Thy billows have gone over me." You cannot understand the pattern now, it is a hopeless puzzle.

Dear little fellow-suffer, our hearts ache for you. One of the saddest sights in the world is a little child trying to carry a grown person's burden. But do not look down or be discouraged. Look up. Take your burdens, your cares, and troubles to the King. "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy." He will uphold you, strengthen you, comfort and bless you.

This is the only way out of troubles in this world. Does it not sometimes seem as if you little ones were the only happy people? As we look about us how many weary, careworn faces we see. Why is it? Simply because we will bear our own burdens; we will not take them to the King. We would rather be miserable in our own way than happy in God's way.

Take for your motto in life; "Trust in God." The men whom the world remembers with the greatest honour have been men of prayer; men who have, as little children, taken all their troubles to the King. Did you ever read how William the Silent, Prince of Orange, laboured and fought for God and his country? His armies forsook him, his most carefully laid plans failed over and over again, his best friends turned against him. But he kept on his way unfaltering, never giving up, never even discouraged. All his letters breathe a simple and child-like confidence in God, and his God did not forsake him.

In whatever circumstances we may be placed, however great may be our troubles and perplexities, let us always remember to take them all to our King.

God—A Home

"*Behold my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort.*"—*Ps. lxxi.* 3.

I am going to talk to you about the best home you could ever think of. There is no home anywhere, however fine, however full of toys and pictures,

however full of smiles and sweetness, that can compare with it. And where do you think it is? In Heaven? Oh, no. It is just here beside you. All you have to do is to enter through the Door, Which is Jesus Christ, and you are there, at home, in God's palace, in God's heart, where there is everything to make you happy. *God is a home*; that's what our text says.

But what is home without liberty, without freedom? You would not like to have God looking down upon you all the time. He is so good that you are afraid of Him. You would not care about being in a fine house where you had to be careful how you walked and how you spoke, where you would be punished for every naughty act. Ah, my dear children, if you only get into this home, your hearts will be so changed that it will be your delight to please God. You always like to be near those whom you love. The flower looks out every morning for the sunlight. It would die for very grief if you should put it somewhere where the smiles of Heaven could not reach it. And so it will be with you if you only get into this blessed home. You will live in your Heavenly Father's smiles, and you will have all the freedom that you want.

But I don't care, say you, to live in a home where there is no playground. I like to run, and leap, and enjoy myself. Well, do you think God is displeased with your innocent amusements? Did He not give the little birds wings to fly and voices to sing? Everything God ever made is set to music. There is nothing that pleases me more in the family than to see the children happy. And when you get into this home, God will be your Father, and nothing will be sweeter music to His ear than the sound of your merry laughter. He has made every provision for your happiness. This beautiful home has in it a playground, and picture-gallery, and everything else that a young heart changed by the Holy Spirit can desire.

But you say again, What is home without a mother? Ah, it is not necessary that you should leave your earthly mother to become an inhabitant of this palace-home. And more than that, immediately you yield your heart to Christ God becomes your mother. You may have thought that God was hard and cruel, looking down upon His children with angry, frowning face; but it is a great mistake; God is love. "As a mother comforteth, so will I comfort you," is what He says to all those who come to Him—to all His dear children.

I. A home is a place of shelter and security. Every boy and girl feels safe at home. There is a little fellow trembling and crying in the presence of a lot of boys larger than himself. They are about to punish him for something that he has done. But by and by, when their attention has been diverted by some passing object of interest, he gets an opportunity to escape, and he runs with all his might until he gets to the doorstep of his own home, and there all fear is gone.

Now, there are a great many dangers and troubles in the world that lay hold of us and threaten us, and frighten us; but if we only get into this home of which I am speaking, they can't harm us. God is a sure refuge for His children.

Long, long ago, in the olden times, the great rich people lived in castles built of strong stone walls, and frequently surrounded by a deep, broad ditch, so that robbers and enemies would not be able to enter and despoil them of their property. Very frequently they used to fight with each other, and when the battle began to turn against them they would flee into their castles, and there they were safe. Now, God is a great castle; He is "a strong habitation." If you once get inside of it no enemy can harm you. The devil himself cannot follow you into this blessed retreat.

I know a little boy who was out in the park one afternoon when a storm

came up suddenly. The great clouds were piling one upon another, and the deep, loud thunder-peals made the earth fairly tremble under that little boy's feet as he ran with all his might towards home. And when he got there wasn't he glad? His young heart leaped for very joy as he nestled close to father's chair. All fear was gone, for he was at home. Now that is just what God is to His children. He is a refuge from the storms of life.

I once heard of a lonely traveller who sought to cross one of the Western prairies. The only thing he had to guide him was a path that had been made by other travellers in the high grass. But he had not gone very far before the snow began to fall, at first in scattered flakes, like large white feathers, but by and by with thick and blinding fierceness. He soon lost every trace of the path along which he had travelled. He was lost, bewildered; and as the darkness began to gather around him he was greatly alarmed. He cried out for help, but the wild winds only laughed at him as they swept by. He was almost in despair when he saw through the blinding flakes a flickering light. Toward it he bent his exhausted energies. Stumbling and falling over the drifts that had accumulated here and there, he at length came to a settler's cottage. Can you imagine his thankfulness and joy when he found the storm behind him, and a bright fire and abundant welcome before him, in that friendly hut? He was safe. He was happy. In the moment of greatest peril he had found a refuge. Now that is just what God is to every traveller caught in the storm of life. If you but see the light that streams out from the windows of His palace, of His heart, and follow it, you will be safe from harm. The door of mercy is always open; the fires of His love and forgiveness are always glowing; the welcome which He gives is always abundant.

II. A home is a place of supply. I know that there are homes where children do not have many nice things, where they have at times to suffer hunger. But such is not the case with this home of which I am speaking. This home has everything to make those who live in it satisfied and happy. Many of you have very pleasant homes, where there are ever so many good things. You have kind fathers and mothers, who are pleased to give you almost everything that you desire—nice food, beautiful clothes, attractive toys, and interesting books. But they cannot do for you what God can. If you make Him your home you "shall not want any good thing." In Him is the most satisfying supply. The Heavenly manna, even Angel's food, is here. The table of this spiritual home is a continual banquet—"a feast of fat things, of wine on the lees well refined."

III. Home is a place of love. There are some homes that are unworthy of the name. They are scenes of strife and misery. They are gardens without flowers, temples in ruins, palaces with every beautiful ornament destroyed. Thank God that, to most of us at least, home means everything that is dear and precious. I remember when I was a boy being sent away to a boarding-school, and if ever a little fellow was home-sick I was. Oh, how I cried for home! Every night, for weeks, I sobbed myself to sleep. I would have given anything if I could but run into my mother's arms. And why did I think so much of home? Oh, it was because there was so much love there. The very atmosphere was summer, and I longed to be in it as much as ever a flower languished for the reviving shower. If you were sent away among strangers how your young hearts would yearn to get back again! "Home, sweet home; there is no place like home." And this is just what God is to all His children—a home, a place of love. Mother, father, wife, children, are but faint, faint images of God. He is the Fountain of all true affection. There is no place in the universe so safe and delightful.

Dear children, God is willing to become your home now. He is inviting each one of you to come to Him. As the little birds seek shelter and comfort under the parental wing, so may you under the broad and feathery pinions of your Heavenly Father's love. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you are in God's heart. The Angels have not a richer, brighter, happier home than have they who believe. The moment you accept Christ as your Saviour, you are welcomed by God. How rich and safe and happy must they be who are living in God's heart! Oh, dear children, come! The door is open, the table is spread with everything that you can need, bright spirits are waiting to minister to your happiness. Come now, and make God your home."—*Rev. B. D. Thomas.*

The Christian's Victory

"*Thanks be to God, Which giveth us the victory.*"—1 *Cor. xv.* 57.

The good soldier who goes out to fight is not content unless the victory is gained by the army in which he is enlisted. Neither is the Christian soldier—of whom I have told you—content unless he feels that he too is continually gaining victories over his spiritual adversaries. But there are times when he is overcome. Sometimes he does not resist sufficiently. The enemy comes with a smiling face, enticing him to sin, and he yields for a time. Ignorance of ourselves will also cause this, when we do not know which are the sins that most easily beset us. Unwatchfulness and ignorance of our enemies, of their power and cunning, are other causes of defeat. Many Christians are surprised and yield when off their guard. Christ says, "Watch." The Christian who falls must suffer much pain and remorse. He will be like Peter, who, having denied his Lord, "went out and wept bitterly," or like David (Ps. xxxviii., li.). But his defeat is only temporary. He rises up, and is more determined than ever to conquer in the strength of his Captain (Ps. xxxvii. 24; Prov. xxiv. 16; Micah vii. 8). Let me tell you how the victory is to be obtained (1 Cor. xv. 57).

I. It is God Who Gives It.—He loves His people and has promised His aid (Isa. xli. 13; xl. 29-31; liv. 17; 2 Cor. xii. 9; Ps. cxviii. 13; cxl. 7). When the Israelites were escaping from Egypt, and were pursued by Pharaoh, they were told by Moses not to be fearful, for the Lord would fight for them (Ex. xiv. 14). When Apollyon was fighting with Christian ("Pilgrim's Progress"), and pressing him so that he began to despair of life, God gave him strength, and he was quickly enabled to exclaim, "We are more than conquerors through Him Who has loved us."

II. It is through Christ (Rom. vii. 25).—Kings do not always accompany their armies to war, but Christ is ready in every case to go with His followers to the battle, and remain with them through all the different engagements. If it were not so, there would be nothing but defeat for the soldiers under Him.

Why does God give victory to His people? Not because they are worthy of it, but for the sake of His dear Son, Who pleads for them, and also on account of the great love that He bears towards all His creatures (Deut. xxiii. 5; John xvi. 27; 1 John iv. 16). The warfare, as you know, is sometimes long; but, as soon as the fighting commences, victory also commences. As soon as a person sees his sin, and determines to forsake it, he begins to "resist the devil." Then comes the Conqueror, and helps him—gives him strength equal to the occasion (Deut. xxxiii. 25; Ps. xxi. 1; lxxx. 2), and teaches him how to fight (Ps. xviii. 34; cxliv. 1; 2 Sam. xxii. 35); and so on for the rest of his life, against all the enemies of the soul, until all are con-

quered, except death. And over this, too, is the victory gained, for when sin is conquered, through faith in Christ, the fear attending death is taken away. There need be none; for he who is serving God faithfully here, knows that death is only the means of removing him from all the dangers and difficulties which beset his path, and of placing him for ever in the Kingdom of his Father (2 Kings xxii. 20; Job iii. 17; Ps. xxiii. 4; Phil. i. 21; Rev. xiv. 13). The righteous hath hope in his death. Many are not only willing, but anxious for the time to come when they shall leave this state (Job xiv. 13, 14; Luke ii. 29; 2 Tim. iv. 6). We have other instances of martyrs who have welcomed death more as a friend than an enemy. One who suffered in Italy said, "Death is sweet to me." At the time mentioned by the Apostle victory will be complete. Death will be swallowed up in victory (ver. 54). Then will the Christian be able to exclaim, in a tone of triumph, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

We ought to be grateful and give thanks for this victory, for several reasons.

1. Because it is final and complete. The soldier is placed beyond the power of his foes; sin will be seen no more; the devil will be seen no more; the earth will have passed away (2 Pet. iii. 10), and death will cause no more trouble; but the Christian will enjoy the blessings arising from the victory, for ever, in the paradise of God.

2. Because the victory is given to those who are not worthy of it. All mankind were once dead in sin—were once lost. Our first parents committed sin, for which they were condemned to die, and the punishment remained to their descendants. All are guilty and sinful, but the triumph still is for all who seek it.

3. For the means used to obtain the victory. This was through Jesus Christ. He saw that we were lost and undone. He knew that it was only through His blood that man could be saved, so He left all His glory that He had with His Father, and came down, as Man, to die in our stead. He gained His great victory on the Cross, and by His triumph all who believe in Him are enabled to triumph also. How much Christians have to thank Him for! He is their all—their only hope and joy.

But, remember, in order to ensure victory, prayer is necessary. The prayer of faith has won many victories and conquered many enemies (Ex. xvii. 8, 14; 2 Kings iv. 33-35; 2 Chron. xx. 10-12, 24). What encouragement the Bible gives to continue "instant in prayer"!

We can do nothing of ourselves. We may just as well never go forth at all as soldiers as go without prayer. We must ask God's help, that we may receive a blessing in all our endeavours to fight in His name for His glory.

And we are told that the Christian must be steadfast and immovable (ver. 58). Excitement in religion is of no use. If a soldier were to set out to war, all eager to arrive at his destination, and all of a sudden were to turn back, would he gain the victory? (Luke ix. 62). Many professing Christians do turn back, and lose all hope of success. We are to go on unto perfection. If we obey the commands of our Captain, success is promised. "Your labour is not vain in the Lord." Multitudes have already overcome (Rev. vii.). God will not forget work done for His glory.

Will you not try, then, to obtain this victory? How sad it will be if you make no attempt to conquer! If you do not, remember nothing is your portion but everlasting misery. Turn, then, to your Saviour; He will not refuse your prayer. Do not be sleeping Christians, but active in the cause of your King; "steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

Prayer

"Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace."—Heb. iv. 16.

Prayer is speaking with God, and receiving His answer. Prayer is both the test of our religion, and the other means by which we are religious. It is the test of our religion, because, if we love Christ with all our hearts, and believe in God really directing everything on earth, it will be impossible for us not to open all our thoughts of joy or sorrow to our Almighty Father. We are not accustomed to hide from those we love, or to keep silence with them. And exactly the same feeling which makes you speak readily, and be uneasy till you have spoken, with those earthly beings whom you really love, will force you to speak with God also. Could you be silent in your homes? Neither can you help praying, if Heaven is your home.

Again, prayer is the help to a true sense of God's presence and abiding love. Why do we love those whom we love on earth, excepting from finding day by day their sympathy, their help. Now, we must try God and God's promises in the same way. How can we know what He will do for us, if we never speak to Him? And how can we love Him, if we never receive His blessings, because we have never tried to receive them? You will observe I speak of prayer as a real asking for what we really care for—nothing but this is prayer. And if we really care for God and His Christ, we shall be ready enough to speak with them. Who is not glad to speak with those he loves? Who is not happy to have them at his side, to feel secure and quiet with them near?

But you will easily see from this that if prayer depends upon love and a sense of our own needs, prayer can be no sudden thing to be taken up or put down at will. We cannot love in a moment; we cannot, therefore, pray in a moment. Prayer is the voice of life, the unutterable yearning of the immortal spirit (when it has felt its needs) for its home, the cry of our daily life "that we will arise and go to our Father." It is indeed true that we must pray in order that we may pray, because the praying heart is God's gift. Whatever our difficulties are, we must at once commit them to God, and if we are sincere He will make them vanish away. If prayer, then, be our difficulty, and we do not know how to pray, we must pray for this knowledge; we must pray that we may live well, and live that we may pray well, for prayer is the voice of our life. The same growth, therefore, and the same aids to growth, that are necessary to holy life, are necessary to prayer. If we love God in our lives we shall pray, and if we really pray we shall love God. For it is His promise that when we ask we shall receive, when we seek we shall find, when we knock it shall be opened. Surely at the Day of Judgment, to those who are lost not the least bitter stroke will be that they were lost so easily, that they had but to stretch out their hands, as it were, in earnest, and they might have grasped salvation.

But prayer can least of all our religion be a sham. Our hearts *will* wish, and joy, and sorrow, and those are our real prayers whatever our lips may say. Prayer must be learnt, just as experience in life must be learnt; for prayer is the voice of our life. Those who love Christ, or wish to love Christ, pray. No one else does. And no one loves Christ who does not strive earnestly to prepare his heart to receive his King. No one prays really who does not strive to live so that his life may be a prayer; that is, who does not, day by day, wait with patient joy on his Saviour, and think of Him most. We must learn to pray, and pray that we may learn; and as an assistance to

this, we should have ready in our minds always some short petition, such as, "O Christ, give me grace to love Thy will, to rest upon Thy love, to feel it daily more and more." And it will be best if we frame this petition for ourselves according to our own real religious wants and yearnings; or have ready some of Christ's promises, such as, "Come unto Me, all that travail and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest"; so ready, that the moment we feel any trouble, it may as a matter of course dart into our minds, and be there whenever the mind is not occupied. No one can tell the inestimable comfort of having a little store of such expressions in our hearts, so that our feelings of joy or sorrow, or even of unoccupied time, at once clothe themselves in such a dress.

If we believed, we should pray. It is a most glorious thought for us in this lower earth to know that our ascended Lord is now in Heaven victorious, and giving victory, over every enemy; ready to hear the half-formed thought, catching the sigh checked at its very birth, with a gentleness and love greater than the love of earth, joined to an Almighty and All-wise Power to help and to save. Think what it is to be allowed to work for Him, think what it is to be allowed to serve in His army, honour worthy of being bought by lifelong suffering; but far more, this great Being loves us and would be loved; calls His palace our home, and entreats us to converse with Him, to tell Him our wants and our joys; in one word, entreats us to pray. But remember, prayer is the voice of our lives. May He Who alone can, give us grace to learn to pray.—*Rev. E. Thring.*

The Dangers and Temptations of Life

"*I pray . . . that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.*"—*St John xvii.* 15.

Though our Blessed Saviour was proclaimed at His advent as the "Prince of Peace," His disciples entered not upon a peaceful course, but were subject as well to temporal as to spiritual trials. Both awaited them. Indeed, in the beautiful and affecting prayer which He offered up for them, before He was removed from earth to Heaven, He distinctly impressed upon their minds, that the life of His followers was to be a life of constant struggle against evil: and for this reason, that they were not to withdraw themselves from the world, but to live in it, to the glory of their God, and the well-being of their fellow-creatures: "I pray not," saith He, "that Thou, O Father, shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil." Now thus to live amidst the dangers and temptations of the world, yet free from the evil of it, is so manifestly not in our own power; is so far beyond our own strength; that our Church, in the several parts of our Liturgy, continually refers to the necessity we all lie under, of gaining God's gracious support and protection to help our infirmities: and to supply that strength, which alone can enable us to resist evil, but which we cannot ourselves supply. In this Collect, therefore, are renewed, the confession of weakness, and the strain of supplication for strength, which were offered in the one immediately preceding. God knoweth us to be set in the midst of many and great dangers; and yet He doth not remove us from them, but guardeth us from their evil influence. Our Blessed Lord and Master ordained that so it should be; He did not ask that we should be taken from the world, but that we should be delivered from the evil of it.

It is this consideration which supports the Christian in the deepest distress, and under the most powerful temptations. He is not dismayed in the hour of danger, because he knows that thereunto he is called; and that God will grant him strength and protection; neither is he surprised by temptation to

evil, because he knows it to be the Divine ordinance, that he should, for a season, continue in a world which is full of temptation; and he believes that God is able and willing to give him strength to resist, and ultimately to overcome it.

Without this faith, as a city of refuge whereunto we may flee from our enemies, our state—weak and frail as it is by nature—would be altogether wretched, and utterly hopeless. For what is life, when considered only as to our present state of existence but a continued succession of changes, which baffle our counsels; and of chances, which mock our prudence? Cares, like restless waves, follow each other so unceasingly, that few men can do otherwise than confess with Job, that "man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward." Sometimes unavoidable poverty clouds the days of health; or sickness embitters prosperity. Sometimes the detractions of envy overtake us; or we are pursued by the hatred of one to whom we have undesignedly given offence; or malice persecutes us; or our good name is undeservedly assailed, and we become the victims of uncharitableness. Our danger then consists in the temptation which such trials hold out to us to be uncharitable in return, and to repine against the dispensations of our God. At another time our danger lies in prosperity. The pleasures of life, its riches and its honours, tempt us to forsake the service of religion, and the welfare of our soul. Devoted to this world, we are forgetful of the next.

But suppose we are spared these trials from without, dangers from within await us. The soul perhaps is wounded with the sting of conscious sin: it is disquieted. Disquiet would sink into despondency, and despondency into despair; but faith preserves us from this danger also. The faithful soul fortifies itself in the Lord. It remembers that Being, Who, whilst He knoweth us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that by reason of our frailty we cannot always stand upright, will therefore grant to us such strength and protection, as may support us in all those dangers, and carry us through all those temptations. Animated by this holy confidence, and having faith to ask and a desire to receive the supporting aid of the Holy Spirit, the Christian, however frail his nature be, allows himself in no failure of duty towards either God or man; no murmur against God, when in distress; no uncharitableness towards men, when oppressed. He considers, that though the natural man be weak, the spiritual man is "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." Man may be frail and wavering of purpose; the dangers which surround him may be many and great; the temptations which assail him may be numerous and perplexing; but in all dangers he may be supported, and through all temptations carried safe, by an Almighty Being, to Whom all things in Heaven and earth do bow and obey—even by his Father and his God; through Jesus Christ.—*Rev. J. James, D.D.*

Anecdotes and Illustrations

Strong in Him.—"I was requested," said the late Dr Macleod, "by a brother minister who was unwell to go and visit a dying boy. He told me before some remarkable things of this boy. He was eleven years of age, and during three years' sickness had manifested the most patient submission to the will of God, with a singular enlightenment of the Spirit. I went to visit him. He had suffered the most excruciating pain. For years he had not known one day's rest. I gazed with wonder at the boy. After drawing near to him, and speaking some words of sympathy, he looked at me with his blue eyes—he could not move, it was the night before he died—and breathed into my ear these few words, 'I am strong in Him.' The words

were few, and uttered feebly; they were the words of a feeble child in a poor home, where the only ornament was that of a meek and quiet and affectionate mother; but these words seemed to lift the burden from the very heart, they seemed to make the world more beautiful than ever it was before; they brought home to my heart a great and blessed truth. May all of us be strong in Him."

Courage.—Chrysostom before the Roman Emperor was a beautiful example of true Christian courage. The Emperor threatened him with banishment if he still remained a Christian. Chrysostom replied, "Thou canst not, for the world is my Father's house; thou canst not banish me." "But I will slay thee," said the Emperor. "Nay, but thou canst not," said the noble champion of the faith again; "for my life is hid with Christ in God." "I will take away thy treasures." "Nay, but thou canst not," was the retort; "for, in the first place, I have none that thou knowest of. My treasure is in Heaven, and my heart is there." "But I will drive thee away from man, and thou shalt have no friend left." "Nay, and that thou canst not," said once more the faithful witness; "for I have a Friend in Heaven, from Whom thou canst not separate me. I defy thee: there is nothing thou canst do to hurt me."

He does All Things Well.—Mrs Veitch, one of the "Ladies of the Covenant," wife of Rev. William Veitch, a Scottish minister of the seventeenth century, during the imprisonment of her husband, conducted herself with a degree of composure which surprised even the rude and heartless military. Narrating one scene, she says, "It bred some trouble and new fear to my spirit; but He was graciously pleased to set home that word, 'He does all things well'; 'Trust in the Lord, and fear not what man can do'; which brought peace to me in such a measure, that I was made to wonder; for all the time the officers were in the house He supported me so that I was not in the least discouraged before them."

Strength in Weakness.—Some living creatures maintain their hold by foot or body on flat surfaces, by a method that seems like magic, and with a tenacity that amazes the observer. A fly marches at ease with feet uppermost on a plastered ceiling, and a mollusc sticking to the smooth, water-worn surface of a basaltic rock, while the long swell of the Atlantic at every pulse sends a huge white billow, roaring, and hissing, and cracking, and crunching over it, are objects of wonder to the onlooker. That apparently supernatural solidity is the most natural thing in the world. It is emptiness that imparts so much strength to these feeble creatures. A vacuum, on the one side within a web-foot, and on the other within the shell, is the secret of their power. By dint of that emptiness in itself, the creature quietly and easily clings to the wall or the rock, so making all the strength of the wall or rock its own. By its emptiness it is held fast; the moment it becomes full it drops off. Ah, it is the self-emptiness of a humble, trustful soul, that makes the Redeemer's strength his own, and so keeps him safe in an evil world.—*Rev. William Arnot.*

Hitherto the Lord hath helped Us.—In the years 1821 and 1822, the Hottentots could scarcely procure a morsel of bread, and the garden vegetables almost entirely failed: they were driven for their chief support to the wild fruits of the fields and woods. Those among them who had felt the power of the grace of God, displayed its influence in a very striking manner. A missionary said, "It is distressing to see what hunger they sometimes endure, but also edifying to find them so firm in their faith and confidence in God. I asked some, who had formerly enjoyed plenty of comfort, whether they had not rather return, as they found living so hard." One said, "No, indeed; in that place I had food for my *body*, but not for my

soul; the Gospel, that I hear in *this place*, is more to me than victuals and drink." "It is true," said another, "I often go to bed with an empty stomach, but I pray to the Saviour to make me satisfied, and feel no inclination to complain. *It will not be always so*, and though my garden fruits are all burnt up, I will plant again and again, till it shall please God to make it grow." Their hope in the providence of God was not disappointed.—*Whitecross.*

God's Help (From the "Life of Dr Barnardo").—"Going down to certain meetings then about to be held at Oxford, I met at the railway station a Christian brother in a humble sphere of life, whom I knew as one of the godliest men it was ever my privilege to meet, a man of prayer, a man of faith, a man whose very face told you something of the peace of God which reigned within. We met on the platform and he told me he was going to Oxford too. We talked together, walking up and down the platform, and then in the carriage when we got in. I had many burdens on my mind then, and was feeling sad and downcast about them. I suppose I showed my grief in the expression of my face, for he said to me in a tone of very sincere sympathy, when we were in the railway carriage alone, 'How is your work going on?' Then I told him all about my heavy burdens. We were alone. This man of God thought for a moment, and then he turned to me and said, 'If God shows you that your proposed scheme is too large, and that you should give it up, are you prepared to give it up?' I thought for a moment too. I thought if God's approval and blessing were not with me, it were better I did not succeed from an earthly point of view. So I said, 'Yes; I am quite prepared.' He replied after a moment's pause, 'We are going down to Oxford for a special purpose, for spiritual refreshment. Let us, here, in this carriage alone, kneel down and commit your case to God, and let us ask Him, if it be His will, to show you clearly, before you leave Oxford, whether you should go on or turn back.' . . .

"In the morning, while I was dressing, a man came to the door and knocked. I thought it was the servant bringing up hot water. I said, 'Come in.' The door was opened just about wide enough for a man to shove his head in. A head was thrust in, but so that I could hardly see who the owner of it was. His hair was all dishevelled, and he was evidently not yet fully dressed. 'Is your name Barnardo?' he asked. I said 'Yes.' 'You are thinking of building a village for little girls at Ilford, are you not? You want some cottages?' Well, I was scarcely able to answer him. But I said 'Yes, yes.' He asked, 'Have you got any?'—never coming in beyond putting his head through the door. I replied, 'No, not yet.' 'Well,' he cried, 'put me down for the first cottage. Good morning,' and away he went.

"But as to putting him down, I did not know his name; I had not seen his face properly. I rushed down the corridor after him, and caught him. I said, 'You must come back.' I got him back into the room. What was the history of his gift? He had had a dear child, a daughter, whom he had lost some months before, and he had resolved in his mind to commemorate that daughter by rearing some institution, such as his means would enable him to do. He had heard of our work, and had determined to help us, but had hitherto done nothing. He never sent me word of his intention, but down there at Oxford whither I had gone after having specially asked God's guidance, the message came to me in that striking manner. In the morning, while he was dressing, he had asked the 'boots' who were in the hotel. The man replied, 'I will get you the book and you can see.' He went down and got him the book of arrivals. There was my name and my number. On the spur of the moment, in his impulsive way, he dashed away, without

finishing his dressing, got to my room, just opened the door, and made his announcement in the fashion I have told you.

"I went presently down to the breakfast-room. My poor-rich friend of the previous night was there by appointment. When I came up to him, I suppose he saw in my face, an expression somewhat different from that of the former evening, and he just looked at me, and then quietly said, 'It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking I will hear.' And we together there and then gave God thanks for that wonderful answer to prayer."

Questions on the Collect

1. What are we told in the Collect that God knows? 2. Which dangers are most to be feared—those of the soul or of the body? 3. Mention some of the dangers to which our souls are liable? 4. And some to which our bodies are exposed? 5. Where do we pray to be delivered from evil? 6. What does the Collect say God knows we cannot do? 7. Why cannot we always stand upright? 8. What do we ask God in the Collect to grant us? 9. For what purpose? 10. Mention persons whom God supported in all dangers and brought safely through all temptations?

The Gospel

St Matthew viii. 23-34.

Stilling the Tempest

"*Lord, save us: we perish.*"—*St Matt. viii.* 25.

The Lake of Gennesareth, or Sea of Galilee, is a large body of water; and the River Jordan, which runs through it, causes at all times a considerable motion in the centre of the lake; when the wind blows strongly from the S.E., and meets the current of the river, the sea becomes so rough, that any small vessels are in the greatest danger, and in this way many are lost. We read, that as they sailed, Jesus fell asleep. We must remember that for our sakes Jesus had become subject to all the pains of hunger, fatigue, cold, etc.; well might He, therefore, be tired out with His continual labours, for He never spared Himself, or consulted His own ease or comfort; but was always at work, going from one place to another, doing good to others. What a difference between Him and us! For we are unwilling to deny ourselves in the least thing for the sake of saving trouble to others; nor are we willing to give up our own wills, even for the sake of pleasing God.

Whilst Jesus and His disciples were now crossing the Lake of Gennesareth, "there came down a storm of wind on the lake," and a "great tempest in the sea," "insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves," and was filled with water, and in great danger of sinking. "And Jesus was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow." The disciples knew where to look for help; they were in jeopardy or danger, so they "came to Him and awoke Him, saying, Master, carest Thou not that we perish? Lord, save us: we perish!"

The fears of the Apostles were at this time stronger than their faith; they should have felt that sleeping or waking their Lord could preserve them through every danger. For this they were blamed, for "He saith unto them,

Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" but He had compassion on their weakness, for "He arose, and rebuked the winds and the raging of the water: and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." After a great storm the waves naturally continue rough for some hours, but now at a word the waters of the lake became at once smooth, and still. This sudden ceasing of the storm filled the Apostles, accustomed as they were to see wonderful works done by Jesus, with astonishment and awe. We are told, that "the men marvelled, and they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of Man is this? for He commandeth even the winds and the water, and they obey Him." Such a miracle must have strengthened the faith of the disciples, and convinced them more and more, that He Who could do such things, was indeed no mere man, but the Son of God, the Ruler of the universe, to Whom all things do bow and obey. The voyage was now over; the ship reached the shore; and Jesus and His disciples came into the country of the Gadarenes, or Gergesenes, where Jesus immediately performed another miracle, on a man possessed with devils, exceeding fierce. Jesus, pitying the condition of this unhappy man, commanded the unclean spirit to come out of him. Then the devil who spake in this poor demoniac, cried out, "What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of the Most High God? Art Thou come hither to torment us before the time? I beseech Thee, torment me not." Even the devils acknowledged Jesus to be the Messiah; and knew well that in the end of the world, all evil spirits would be driven away into misery and darkness; but he now asks Him not to interfere with his power before that time. To such a request Jesus could not, of course, listen: and the devils, finding that they must leave the poor man whom they had so long tormented, then besought Him that He would at least suffer them to go away into a herd of swine, which were feeding nigh unto the mountains, a good way off from them. "And Jesus said unto them, Go." No sooner was the permission given, than the evil spirits entered into the swine, and the whole herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters: and they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country; and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils.

Pigs were unclean animals, and it was therefore sinful of any Jew to keep them: if the owners of these swine were Jews, they were justly punished for their disobedience. Perhaps the Gadarenes were not Jews, and kept these swine to show that they did not regard or obey the Law of Moses; if so, it was well for them to see that the Lord God of the Hebrews could force men to obey His commands. When we read what happened as soon as the evil spirits took possession of the swine, we should remember the dreadful fate of all who suffer themselves to be led or guided by the devil. There is no escape for them; the swine could not help themselves, but the devil has no more power over us now than we choose to give him. If we resist him, he will not harm us; he will try, and we may have to fight hard, but if we do, we shall be more than conquerors through Jesus Christ.

We read that the keepers of the swine fled, and told how they had been destroyed, and how the demoniac had been healed. The men of the city, grieved at the loss of their property, and probably afraid that if Jesus remained amongst them the same sort of thing might happen again, besought Him to depart out of their coasts: a request in which the whole multitude of the Gadarenes joined. They had better have besought Him to remain, and teach them what they should do. It is a dreadful thing to wish God to leave us undisturbed in our sins! The man who had been delivered from the power of the devil, wished, on the contrary, to go away in the ship with Jesus and

His disciples; but he was told rather to go home to his friends, and tell them what great things the Lord had done for him. And he did so, and declared through all the country what great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.—*Lady Mary Ross.*

The Devils entering into Swine

If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine."—St Matt. viii. 31.

Jesus and His disciples were now in the country of the Gadarenes or Gergesenes; the former name was given because of the important city of Gadara, which was chief in the district. When Jesus came out of the ship, immediately there met Him two miserable men possessed with devils, who lived in the tombs and caverns among the mountains, and were so exceedingly fierce that no travellers could pass by that road. One of them had often been bound with fetters and chains, to restrain him from doing mischief to himself or others; but he was so strong that the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces—neither could he be tamed by any means. Always, night and day, he was in the mountains and the hollow tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones; he wore no clothes, nor would stay in any house like other people. For a long time he had been in this wretched state, "driven of the devil into the wilderness."

When they saw Jesus afar off, they ran and worshipped Him, falling down before Him, and cried with a loud voice saying, "What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God Most High? Art Thou come hither to torment us before the time?" For Jesus commanded the unclean spirits to come out; and He asked one of the men his name, who answered Him that it was Legion, "for we (the evil spirits) are many." "And they besought Him that He would not command them to go out into the deep." A good way off there was a herd of many swine feeding, near the mountain. All the devils besought Him, saying, "If Thou cast us out, allow us to go into the herd of swine." Forthwith Jesus gave them leave. So they went out of the men, and entered into the swine: behold, immediately the whole herd, numbering two thousand, ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and were choked in the waters. The keepers of the herd, who were feeding the swine when the devils entered into them, fled away into the city and told everything that was done. Numbers of people came out to see Jesus, and found the man who had been worst, him who had been filled with a legion of devils, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind; and the people were afraid. They began to beg Jesus that He would depart out of their country, "for they were taken with great fear," so Jesus went into the ship again.

The poor man who had been delivered from the devils prayed Him that he might stay with Him, but Jesus would not allow this. "Go home to thy friends," said He, "and tell them what great things God has done for thee, and has had compassion on thee." And he went on his way, and published throughout the city of Gadara, and through the whole region of Decapolis, "how great things Jesus had done unto him; and all men did marvel." At the other side of the lake, the people were waiting in crowds for the arrival of Jesus, and were very glad to see Him again.

Jesus Stills the Storm

"What manner of Man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him!"—St Matt. viii. 27.

I. Introduction.—Recall Jesus preaching and teaching. Where? Also attracting attention by His doings—of what kind? Why had Jesus chosen Galilee for His work rather than Judæa?

II. Sea of Galilee.—Other names: Sea of Tiberias or Lake of Tiberias. Why called Lake? Why Tiberias? Lake or Sea of Gennesaret. Sweet water, with plenty of fish in it; many fishermen. The country round then beautiful and fruitful; gardens, fruit orchards; large cities, many villages, many inhabitants; first disciples. As several of the disciples were fishermen Jesus often went with them in their little ships to sail or row upon the lake. If He wanted to avoid the crowd of people on the seashore He had but to step into a boat and talk to them from there; if He wished to cross the water and get to the other side of the lake He had but to say so and Peter's boat was at His service.

III. Jesus Stills the Storm.—Many people like being on the water, but not many like being on the sea in a violent storm. Why not? No one wishes to be drowned. The Sea of Galilee was subject to sudden and violent storms (tempest). A boat might put off from the shore in sunshine and calm weather, and before it reached the other side the clouds might gather, the winds might sweep down from the hills around, lash the waters into angry waves, perhaps overwhelm and sink the vessel. Once Jesus was out in a little ship (or fishing-boat) with His disciples when such a storm came on. He had been teaching and healing all day, and at the evening time was very weary and in need of rest. So He told His disciples He would cross over to the other side of the lake. And Jesus was so tired that He went and lay down in the hinder part of the ship, and with His head on a pillow fell asleep. The wind began to blow, but Jesus did not awake; the waters began to rise, to dash against the sides of the boat and toss it up and down, but Jesus slept on; the wind increased in force and noise, the sails had to be taken in; the waves seemed to get more angry, rose higher and higher, swept over the sides of the vessel and threatened to sink it, yet Jesus still slept on and the disciples did not like to wake Him. But at last the danger was so great that they said, "We must wake Him." They asked Him if He did not care that they were in danger, and cried, "Lord save us; we perish!" When Jesus awoke, heard the howling of the storm, saw the raging sea and the billows come dashing over Him, saw the frightened faces of the sailors and heard their pitiful cries, do you think He was afraid? He said, "Why are ye fearful (afraid), O ye of little faith?" He was not afraid and thought they ought not to have been while He was with them. He arose, said "Peace, be still" to the wind and the sea, and there was a great calm.

IV. Jesus Stills Another Kind of Storm.—The ship got safely to the other side of the lake (eastern side), and Jesus and His disciples landed there. It was a lonely kind of place, very different from the busy Capernaum (western) side, and Jesus sometimes went there with His disciples for quiet and rest. On their way the party had to pass a burying-place—tombs scooped out of rocks and hill-sides—and from these tombs two men rushed out. But they looked like wild men, rough, uncouth creatures, making dreadful noises. They were madmen who had wandered or been driven out of the town and taken up their dwelling in the tombs. They were so fierce and strong that everyone

was afraid of them; no one would go near. But Jesus with His kind look and fearless manner, must have gone near enough for them to speak to Him. "What do you want with us?" they shouted. "Have you come to torment us?" No! Jesus had come to drive the bad, mad spirit out of the men and to leave them with right understandings and quiet minds. We know one of the men sat at the feet of Jesus after he was cured—clothed and in his right mind, the storm of madness and rage and cruelty was over—there was *peace* within. Who had given it? So Jesus showed His power over the *inside* world of men's minds and hearts and feelings as well as over the *outside* world of winds and waves.

V. Peace Be Still.—Those were beautiful words Jesus spoke long ago; do you think people ever need peace *now?* There are others besides mad people who are not at peace. Illustrate the restless, noisy, quarelsome, angry, unhappy people and children who have need to pray, "Lord, grant us Thy peace."

Jesus Asleep and Awake

"*He was asleep.*"—*St Matt. viii.* 24.

I want to read these words in Matthew's Gospel and then to make a picture in your mind of our Lord Jesus Christ, as He lay sleeping so soundly in His disciples' little ship that neither the roaring of the wind nor the beating of the high waves upon the deck of the vessel could wake Him. Let us talk a little—

I. Of Jesus asleep.—When you go out into the parks or into the woods in the winter time, you see all the trees with their branches quite bare of leaves, do you not? Yes, and they remain like that for two or three months. Why is it that they leave off putting forth green leaves? Is it not because they want time to get strength in order that they may come out fresh and green in the spring? If you have a little bird at home in a cage, you know that when evening comes he sits upon his perch without singing or even moving, and he keeps quite still and quiet, until the morning comes. You are not surprised to see him do that; you know that he is sleeping, and you know that if he did not sleep he would soon cease to sing. Sleeping prepares him for singing. If you were to wake him up several times in the night, he would not give you so joyous a song the next morning.

There are some men and women who are very beautiful singers, whom hundreds of people go to hear, and pay as much money to listen to them for an hour as you have to spend in two or three months. But if any of these great singers were not able to *sleep*, they would soon leave off *singing*, would they not? Yes, we should soon hear that they were ill, or that they had lost their reason, or had died.

Some of you boys and girls are very clever at working sums. There is hardly any sum that is given you at school that you cannot do. But if you were not to go to sleep for a week, you would not be able to do a sum. I do not think your schoolmaster would be able to do even an easy sum if he were to be kept without sleep for a week. He would not be able to think, he would be so weary. Every man, and woman, and child, and every living creature that we see around us in the world, needs to sleep sometimes. God has so made them that, after they have been moving about or thinking for a few hours, they get so tired that they cannot do any more, and then they go to sleep and wake up able to work again.

Now, our Lord Jesus Christ was just like us in everything except that He never did or thought anything that was sinful, and He was therefore like us in this—that He grew weary when He had been working hard, and had to go

to sleep to make Him fit to work again. Sometimes He used to keep awake when everybody else was asleep. In the sixth chapter of this Gospel of Luke we read, at the twelfth verse, that He went out one evening into a mountain by Himself to pray "and continued *all night* in prayer to God." But He had to go to sleep sometimes, in order to do the work that He had come into the world to do. Did you ever think how very hard Jesus worked when He was upon the earth? He was a very Great Preacher, but if He had not slept He could not have preached. Preachers who cannot sleep are soon unable to preach. Jesus was a Great Thinker. He had a great deal to think about. He had to think how to meet temptation from Satan, and how to answer sinful men who put questions to Him, and how to teach His disciples so that they should be able to understand, and how to become the Saviour of all the world. He used to think about all the children who would ever become His disciples, and He used to pray for them and for all men and women who would believe on Him to the end of the world. And all this thinking made Him very tired sometimes, for nothing makes people more tired than thinking. It was in the evening when Jesus entered into the ship with His disciples, and all the day He had been hard at work. In the eighth chapter of Matthew we read that He had been healing many sick people, and had been teaching His disciples too, and now it was the end of the day He felt as you do when you have done a long day's work at school, very weary and very much in need of rest. By and by the time would come when the body of our Lord Jesus would be changed, when He would have a body which would be fit to enter Heaven, and that body would not grow tired. Jesus has that body in Heaven now, but He did not have it until after He had risen from the grave. Before that His body was like that of any other man. But notice—

II. That although Jesus was very tired, He did not get as much sleep as He needed on this night.—Did you ever have anyone come to your bedside in the middle of the night, and wake you up when you were sleeping very soundly after going to bed very tired? Do you not think it must be very vexing to have someone come and shout in your ear, "Wake up, wake up, you are wanted directly." Now, Jesus had no nice bed upon which to lie down, but He had lain down upon the deck of the vessel with His head on a pillow, and had soon fallen asleep. But before He had had enough sleep to refresh Him, His disciples came to Him shouting, "Master, Master, we perish!"

Now, this was very trying, because there was really no need to awake Jesus. The disciples were quite safe with Jesus in the vessel. He could take care of them quite as well when He was asleep as when He was awake. But though Jesus knew His disciples were in no danger, you see He was not angry with them for waking Him. Suppose one of your schoolfellows were to come to you to-night and wake you up when you were comfortably sleeping in your warm bed, and tell you that the house was on fire, and you were in danger of being burnt, and when you got up you found it was all a mistake; do you not think you would be rather vexed? I think most people would be. But our Lord Jesus was not like us. He was never vexed or angry, and was always willing to listen to people and to help them, however much He needed rest. And so, although He knew that the disciples had no need to disturb Him, because there was no danger of their being drowned, He got up directly they called Him, and was not displeased. Let us look—

III. At Jesus awake.—What was the first thing that Jesus did after He awoke? *He spoke to the sea.* That was a wonderful and uncommon thing to do, was it not? When a ship at sea is fast filling with water, and the sailors think that she is sinking, and the captain, after many days and nights

of watching, has fallen asleep, the sailors would go and call him if they thought there was any need. And he would jump up directly and begin to give orders. But to whom would he give his orders? Whom would he command? Not the *sea*, but the *sailors*. He would very likely tell them to cut away the boats, and launch them and get into them, and row away from the sinking ship as fast as they could. He would speak, and they would listen and obey, because he is their master. He would not speak to the wind, although he knows it is the wind that has made the sea so rough. Neither would he speak to the sea, although it is the sea that is sinking his ship. You know very well why he would not speak to them. The wind would keep blowing and the waves would keep tossing if he were to speak to them for a whole day. They would not obey him as the sailors do. But when Jesus awoke in the storm, He did not speak to the sailors, but to the sea. He knew that He was Master of the winds and the waves that had so filled the disciples with fear. He is the Captain of the winds and of the sea, and they obey Him just as the sailors obey their captain. What happened when Jesus "rebuked the wind and the raging of the water"? "There was a calm." The wind left off blowing, and the sea was smooth and quiet directly. This is not the way that storms at sea generally leave off. Some of you have often thrown a stone into a river or a pond. Have you ever noticed that, after the stone has got to the bottom, there are little waves upon the water, and you cannot stop them and make the water quite still again directly? You have to wait for some time, and, little by little the waves grow less and less, until presently the pond is quite smooth again. This is the way that the sea becomes smooth again after a storm. I have several times been out at sea, hundreds of miles away from land, in a storm. I have seen the sea look as water looks when it is boiling, all over in motion, and foaming and roaring like ten thousand lions let loose upon the ship. As far as I could see there was nothing but tossing waves, so large that the ship in which I sailed, and which could carry seventy-two great cannon and more than a hundred men, was tossed up and down like a little cork. How I have wished that the wind would leave off blowing!—for that I knew would be the beginning of a calm. But it would be only the *beginning*. How long do you think it would take to make such a sea calm? Many days and nights. After the wind had ceased the waves would be rough until, little by little, they would become smaller, and at the end of a week, perhaps, the sea would be as quiet and peaceful as a little child asleep. Was this the way the sea became calm when Jesus spoke to it? Did His disciples have to wait for a day, or even for an hour, for it to become still? No; as soon as Jesus spoke the words "Peace be still," the winds and the waves became still together. Do you wonder that they said, "What manner of Man is this! for He commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey Him"? There are four lessons I want you to learn from this narrative:—

1. *That Jesus our Saviour is both God and Man.* When He was asleep He showed that He was a man, and when He was awake He showed that He was God. We saw just now that He was a man because He grew weary with His work, and was obliged to go to sleep to get strength to work again. But when He spoke to the sea He showed that He was God, for it would be quite useless for the greatest and wisest and strongest man to tell the sea to be quiet. We read in the Ninety-fifth Psalm, at the fifth verse, that "The sea is God's, and He made it," and in the first chapter of the Gospel of John, that "All things were made by the Word"—that is, by Jesus Christ. And so we know that He is God, for none but God can create things; and He showed that He was God when He worked this wonderful miracle. How great a Saviour is Jesus Christ when He can thus make all things obey Him!

It is His power that keeps the sea in its place now, and prevents it from overflowing the land. And when we think of it, we ought to remember the message that God sent to the people of Israel by His prophet Jeremiah: "Fear you not Me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at My presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea, by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass over it?" (Jer. v. 22.) We are not to be *afraid* of Jesus, but we are to *fear* Him—that is, we are to listen to His words and to obey Him; and we must remember that although He was God, He became a man in order to save us from sin. This same Lord Jesus, Who saved the disciples in the storm, is able and willing to be our Saviour from *sin*, and *sin* is the only thing that can really do us any harm.

2. *That even when you are doing what Jesus has told you to do, you may get into trouble.* Who had told the disciples to get into their boat and row across the Lake of Galilee? It was Jesus Who had said, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake." And when the storm came and the disciples were so frightened, I dare say they thought, "I wonder our Master did not hinder the wind from blowing to-night, now we are on the sea." But many people before and since that time have got into trouble when they have only been obeying God. Do you remember how Joseph got into prison? Was it not because, when his master's wife tempted him to do wrong, he said, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" He would not have been put into prison if he had not been obedient to God. Then there were the three Hebrew young men, who would not bow down to the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar set up. They got into a great storm of trouble, they were put into a fiery furnace, just because they obeyed God. And the martyr Stephen, and John the Baptist, and the Apostle James, of whom we read in the New Testament, not only got into danger, but really had their lives taken from them for doing what God told them. So you must not be surprised, my dear children, if you sometimes get into trouble when you are obeying the Lord Jesus. But—

3. *Jesus always helps us through any trouble that we get in through obedience to Him.* He did not let the disciples sink, did He? No. Did God leave Joseph to die in prison? No. He brought him out, and made him a great man. What became of the three Hebrew youths? When the king looked in at them in the furnace, Whom did he see walking with them? He saw Jesus, and He took such care of them that we read that not even a hair of their head was singed by the fire. "Ah," but you will say, "He let the Jews stone Stephen until he died, and the wicked King Herod kill both John the Baptist and the Apostle James." Yes, so He did; but He helped them through all their suffering, and though their bodies died, we know that *they themselves* were taken home to Heaven. Before Stephen was stoned, he saw the Heavens opened and Jesus waiting to help him and to receive his spirit. And so with all who have died for obeying Jesus. He has never left them to bear their trouble alone, and He has always helped them through it; and we read in the seventh chapter of the Book of Revelation that they are now "before the Throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His Temple. Then, dear boys and girls, never be afraid to obey Jesus. If you get into trouble for it, He will be with you, just as He was with the disciples on the lake, to help you and to take care of you.

And then, last of all, *Jesus will do a great deal for us, even if we have but very little faith.* What is *faith?* It is *trust.* When you trust anyone, you have faith in him. When you go to your father or your mother and ask them to do something for you that you cannot do for yourself, you show that you have faith in them, that you trust them. Had the disciples any faith in

Jesus when they were in the storm? O yes; they had some. They felt that He could help them, or they would not have run to Him as they did. But if they had trusted Him more they would have said, "Our Master will take care of us, though He is asleep," and they would not have been frightened, and they would not have waked Him with the cry, "Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" But Jesus saved them because they had some trust in Him, although it was only a little. Jesus takes notice of the least good that there is in us, and if we ask Him, will make it grow to more. Perhaps some of you feel that you have only a very little faith in Jesus, and this troubles you. Well, Jesus sees that little faith, and if it leads you to pray to Him and ask Him to help you, He will listen to your prayer, and will help you. For, you know, if you really pray to Jesus, you have some faith in Him. You never ask a person to help you if you do not think they are able and willing to help you. And that is *trusting* them—that is *having faith* in them. Sometimes, although you are young, you may be full of trouble, as the disciples were in the storm, and then, if you come and tell all your trouble, He will not turn you away without helping you, but He will say to your heart what He said to the winds and the waves, "Peace, be still." And then your heart will be calm and peaceful, just as the sea was when Jesus spoke to it.

The Two Storms

"Then He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm."—St Matt. viii. 26.

What our breath can do—blow away feathers, paper, etc.—make quite a storm in a cup of water. The wind like our breath. People used to think it the breath of some great, unseen breather. Makes confusion with seas and lakes, such as we may make within a tea-cup. Another power like our breath—called by the same name. "Spirit" means "breath." Can rouse tumult in the mind within as wind rouses tumult on the water. A good spirit can breathe into men—"inspire" them—fill them with power and vigour. A bad spirit, if it gain admission, may rouse to uncontrollable madness. [We say of a man in a fit of passion that "he is not himself," that "he is carried away."] See how our Lord showed Himself Lord of the tempest both without and within.

I. The Storm on the Lake.—Describe the scene. Our Lord's command and its effects. We say sometimes, "You may as well speak to the winds as try to teach so and so," but here was One Who spoke to the winds and they obeyed Him! All remember how King Canute vainly gave his orders to the waves, but our Lord spoke to them as though they were dogs. "Peace; be muzzled" (St Mark's word) and they were still at once. Well might men marvel and say "What manner of man is this," etc. (ver. 27.)

II. The Storm in the Mind.—Landing in an out-of-the-way district—cliffs with caves used as sepulchres—the two demoniacs. Their minds like the sea driven by the winds; driven by many winds—evil spirits.

But these, too, know that they must obey Him Who is obeyed by winds and sea. At His word they are driven off to the abyss, and where there had been madness there is calm. (*Cf.* St Mark v. 15.) "Our Lord"; the winds obey Him, the evil spirits obey Him. Do we obey? If not, no safety. "Many and great dangers," both without and within; but if we will, a great calm. "My peace I give unto you," and His peace is the peace of God which can guard and keep our hearts and thoughts.

—*Rev. C. A. Goodheart, M.A.*

Christ in the Storm

"How is it that ye have no faith?"—St Mark iv. 40.

I would like the children to think for a moment why it was that our Lord Jesus was so fearless in the storm. I do not know whether any of you were ever at sea in a storm; but you can easily understand that it is one of those times when the courage of most people turns into terror. The boatmen who were with Jesus, and who were much more accustomed to the water than He, were afraid and stricken with terror. Yet Jesus was perfectly fearless. Not only was He able to speak calmly, but when He was awakened suddenly, with the voice of terror in His ear, He did not lose His composure. He was without fear.

Now children, why did Jesus have this fearlessness? He answers this in the fortieth verse; "And He said unto them, Why are ye so fearful, how is it that ye have no faith?" He means that if they had trust in God they would not be so fearful, and that He was not afraid because He trusted in God. Then the next difficulty is, Yes, He was without fear; the storm could not strike terror into His heart because there was no fear for Him, inasmuch as He commanded the sea. But our Lord did not use His power to save Himself only. He did not turn the stones into bread. He did not use His power with the Roman soldiers for His protection. He never did His miracles except by faith and trust in His Father. It was by faith He lived and moved and had His being and did His purposes.

But, you say, we cannot do wonders like that if we were in a storm. No, that is true; but if we are about our duty, we may be quite sure that God will protect us until our work is done just as much as if we were in the boat with Jesus. All Christians are in the hands of God, and under the protection of God, as these men in the boat were. The fact that Jesus is not with us in body, makes no difference. He is with us still, and He protects us still; only it is for God's glory if we are to die or suffer; and when that time comes we shall not fear to die if we trust God. We shall not be afraid to meet the storm, even though the storm should wreck our body. We are in God's arms. It does not matter whether we die in the sea or in our beds, for all places are alike really safe to him who is in God's keeping. That is the true feeling of fearlessness. Our life is hid with Christ in God. Here or there, awake or asleep, on the battle-field or in our bed, living or dying, all is alike if we are hidden with Christ in God, if we are His children, and are always with Him. If we live, we live unto the Lord; if we die, we die unto the Lord. Living or dying we are the Lord's. Where is the place for fear? Why are ye so fearful?—*Rev. J. O. Dykes, D.D.*

The Storms of Life

"The Lord hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet."—Nahum i. 3.

You know that when our Lord was teaching on earth, He would often point to the things around Him—to the birds, flowers, or flocks—to everything the people could see, and tell them there was some lesson they could learn from them. I suppose when we hear a storm, and think of it at sea, our first thought is, "Why are there such things as storms?" We do not feel it so much in the middle of the city; but out on the sea, there the storm is a terrible thing, and men may well ask, "Is there anything that a storm can teach us."

This is what the storm can tell us, what the prophet told the people hundreds and hundreds of years ago—that the Lord has His way in the storm as well as in the peaceful summer. Storm and tempest fulfil His work.

What is a storm? There is nothing new in a storm. The winds were there before—but now the winds come sweeping in one way. They can thus destroy noble and mighty vessels, and tear up majestic trees; and all through the Bible a storm is compared to something that happens to us in life, and there is One Who is called our Refuge from the storm. What do we mean by a storm in life? Just as all these winds sweeping in one direction cause a storm, so a storm in life is not one little temptation or anxiety, but it is when the troubles come on thick and the difficulties and temptations come on in crowds. Look at Job—one sorrow and then another, then one trial and then another. And then he bowed down to the very earth till the storm had swept over him. That is what we mean by a storm in life. I suppose, boys and girls, you think there is no such thing, for you are in safety. In bed this morning you did not think much of danger, for the storm was without and you were within. But the day will come when you will have to go out. You are like a ship that will have to face the tempest. In the dock it is in safety, and for months and months it goes on building, and adding on planks and riveting them together so that the water shall not get between them. And then the machinery and fittings are added, and it all goes on and there is no danger. Then the ship goes out into the harbour, and then upon the water to see whether she is watertight. Only after all that she goes out and is able to defy the tempests and storms.

And this is the way, my dear little friends, that you are being built up by parents and those who have the care of you, or pastors whom God has sent—all are trying to join your life together and make you strong; but the day must come when you will have to go out and face the storm.

Oh, that you could remember this—all the loving hands that now surround you must loose their grasp. You leave the nursery, and the whirlwind will try you. Oh, if you think there is little danger of your life being swamped, take care. You have seen a harbour perhaps. Down at Dover, or wherever it may be, there is the harbour—a great arm, as if the land held out its arm and said, "I will direct you." The small boats even lie there safe, for they are within that mighty arm.

That is how most of you are now waiting to go on the voyage of life, and there is the strong arm of a father's or mother's love carrying you safely across those temptations, but the day must come when you must go alone.

There are two things that you will need then—you do not need them so much now. First, you must be strong made, that is, your character must be, as it were, drawn all together—not going one way and then another as chance may direct. You must feel, "Here I am, God has sent me into life as if there were no other, I am not to be drawn to the right or left owing to the choice of others. Soon I must go into the storm and rely upon God."

Do not neglect this while your character is being built. One ship looks as good as another, but the storm tries them. If you walk across the park this afternoon, the trees all look the same. They all look the same in the sunshine; but when the storm bursts, and rushes through the branches, then you know what branches and trees are sound and what are not.

So it will be with you when you pass through the storm of life.

Another thing you must have. Not only are you to be built in devotion and love and grace and truth and purity, but you must have One to steer you on the course. Remember a ship is no good if it stops still—it must go from one place to another. Your voyage is from this world to Heaven; and

so you must be strong, otherwise any little turning to the right or to the left, any little untruth, any little falseness, any little impurity may be dangerous. Always it should be, "I am making for that point; and there is One abroad Whom I can trust. He knows the way."

You know Who will steer you. Your Master is Jesus, and the Bible is your guide.

Remember, many a ship has been well-built, and steered well for a time, and then there came some storm. Some tremendous sorrow comes upon you, and the greatest sorrow that can come upon a father or mother is, that one of their children should grow bad and become a wandering sheep. Think always of that; the greatest sorrow that can be brought upon your father or mother, is the sorrow that you can bring upon them. There are great griefs and great trials against which no vessel seems strong enough, but even then there is One Who is a Refuge against the worst storms of life.

A ship was coming across the Atlantic, but a terrible storm came on as they neared the English coast. And as day after day passed, and the storm still raged, the captain said, "All hope is over." And those on board looked with white and fearful faces at one another, and one man cried, "I see the coast"; and then there came a wild shout from another, "I see the lifeboat!" And, bounding like a living saviour over the livid waves, came the lifeboat, and the crew were rescued and the brave men saved.

And so in the worst storm of life, when your whole frame and faith seem broken by the tempest, there is the hope of rescue by Jesus Christ, Who is the same to-day, yesterday and for ever.—*Rev. T. Teignmouth Shore.*

Evil Spirits

"*There met Him two possessed with devils.*"—*St Matt. viii.* 28.

You know that Holy Scripture teaches us that there are many persons in the world whom we do not see. Besides men and women, and boys and girls, who are human, there are other persons who are not human. And we call them "spirits," by which we mean we do not see them, we do not know when they come, and we do not know when they go away. But we know from God's Word that they are not very far from us. There are good spirits, and they are called Angels; and we are told in Scripture that these are sent as messengers from God to warn good people against sin and temptation, in ways we do not know, simply because we do not see. And on the other hand, there are bad spirits, who are called devils, or demons, or fiends. And they, too, are not far from us. They seem to have some power, to be permitted by God to harm us sometimes, and to put bad thoughts and desires into our minds. And this man about whom I have just read, is a terrible example of how these spirits can torment a man. They had made a madman of him—that is, a man out of his mind, who was in utter wretchedness, who could not live among his fellow-men, and who could not be taken because he was, as the Gospel says, like a wild beast. It shows what would become of men if these spirits had their own way—that is, if we had not someone to protect us, and who keeps our minds and bodies safe from every wicked power.

Now, the great lesson of this passage is, that our dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who was born of Mary for our salvation, is a strong Helper, is stronger than the evil spirits round about us. It is a great thing for you and I who know so little of this unseen part of the world, that if we know that there are spirits trying to do us harm, we also know that there is One Who is their Master. If we did not know this we should be afraid of what would

happen to us some day. We should be afraid of dying, for we should not know but that we should fall into their power. But it is a comfort to know that there walks upon the earth the dear Lord Who was much stronger than a whole regiment, that is what the word "legion" means, for a whole regiment was put to flight by the bare word, "go." They were His creatures, His servants; He could speak and scatter them with a breath. He is our Friend, and uses this power for the good of man. Let us not fear, therefore, let us be strong and brave to resist these evil spirits when they come to us and try to make us bad; whether they come speaking by the lips of bad men, or in whatever form they come, let us not be afraid; but let us remember that our Friend, Jesus, is far stronger than they, and that those who do His will, and act right, are quite safe from all spirits, seen and unseen, in this world and the next. God be praised for this.

The Demoniac of Gadara

"*And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.*"—*St Mark v.* 15.

Jesus spent thirty-three years on earth, and all the while He went about doing good. He delighted to do it. He would sacrifice needful rest or food to do it. He would go out of his road to do it. He would do it for the vilest.

In this chapter we have a memorable example of this.

He was occupied in teaching and healing the multitude who flocked to Him in Capernaum; but He suddenly wanted to be landed on the other side of the Sea of Galilee. His soul was yearning towards a lost sheep there. So He entered a ship and started. When Jesus left the boat, He walked towards the lost sheep whose rescue and salvation had brought Him over. Where is he? Yelling and with threatening arms behold him advancing to meet Jesus. What a lost sheep! Utterly lost to any but Jesus, but not to Him.

I. The Misery of the Man.—He was a notorious character—a desperate maniac. There was a whole host of fiends in him, so that he had the horrors of hell in his own bosom. Does it astonish you that he was "exceeding fierce," so that none dared approach him? And was it for such a one that the Son of God undertook this voyage, and was it on his deliverance that He was now bent?

And can He recover him out of the grasp of the tyrant? Yes, verily, and that in the space of a few minutes.

II. The Majesty of Christ.—As soon as the fanatic man caught sight of Jesus he rushed to attack Him. He supposed that He was a mere man; but Jesus put forth a secret influence, which awed him, as it did the soldiers in Gethsemane. Instead of springing on Him in a fury, he fell down on the ground and worshipped Him, for Jesus had commanded the unclean spirits to come out of him.

That command awed him and he cried, "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, Thou Son of the Most High God. I adjure Thee by God that Thou torment me not." At His majestic word the devils obey and withdraw, as a beaten garrison does from a beleaguered castle, crestfallen, conquered; and the man crept up to the feet of his Saviour, received with gratitude the garments which were offered him, and began to speak lovingly and gently as an Angel.

What a display of Christ's majesty was this!

III. The Mischief of the Devils.—This was shown in their violence

when in the man. They turned him into a tiger—the terror of his neighbourhood. But it was further shown in what they did when they had left. They begged permission to go into an immense herd of swine feeding hard by. Jesus suffered them. No sooner were they in their new entertainers, than the whole herd ran down a steep place into the lake and were choked. What became of the devils? It would appear that they scrambled out of the swine and entered into the Gadarenes. The Gadarenes, we are told, assembled round Jesus and "entreated Him to depart out of their coasts." Was not this another instance of their determined mischief?

In conclusion, devils are abroad in England as in Gadara. If they do not rule us, they have access to us. None of us but have heard their evil whispers. Satan would, if he could, drive you, as he did this poor man, from those who love you, and strip you of the white robes of purity, and make you a curse instead of a blessing.

Now Jesus promises to aid us against him. Are you putting yourself under His daily protection? Does He hear you morning and evening crying "Deliver us from evil"? Keep close to the Lord Jesus and you will escape all the snares of the Wicked One.

So, doubtless, as the boat pushed off from Gadara's shores, the freed captive would say with tears, "I will keep near to Him in all holy conversation, and then I shall be sure that He will keep near to me, till I meet Him in His Heavenly Kingdom."—*Rev. J. Bolton.*

Critical Notes on the Gospel

Ship.—Doubtless a fisherman's boat.

Followed Him.—In other boats.

Tempest.—The lake was greatly exposed to sudden and violent storms.

Asleep.—They embarked at evening, and the passage probably occupied the greater part of the night.

Little Faith.—After all the evidence you have had of My power. The men, not only those in the boat with Him, but also those in the accompanying boats.

Possessed with Devils.—The word "devil" properly belongs to Satan only (1 Peter v. 8). The demons were wicked and malignant spirits who dwelt in, and controlled certain persons. That they were real beings, and not merely insanity or disease, is evident from the fact that such persons are frequently distinguished from those having bodily sickness (Mark i. 32; xvi. 17, 18; Luke vi. 17, 18). The demons have superhuman knowledge (Mark i. 24; Matt. viii. 29; Luke iv. 41). They form a kingdom of their own under the leadership of Satan (Matt. xii. 25-30); and they ask and receive permission to leave men and enter into swine (ver. 12).

To Do with Thee.—What is your business with me?

Before the Time.—The appointed day of punishment (Matt. xxv. 41; Jude vi.).

Legion.—A legion was properly a division of the Roman army containing 6000 men. It is probably used here not only to denote a large number, but an organised band under the leadership of a superior, who speaks for the rest.

Into the Herd of Swine.—We know not the motive which prompted this request. It may have been the love of mischief, or the desire to make trouble for Jesus, as it actually did (ver. 34).

And He said unto them, Go.—Perhaps to afford a more convincing proof to the people of the reality of the possession, and of the cure. Trench suggests, "If this granting of the request of the evil spirits helped in any

way the cure of the man, caused them to resign their hold on him more easily, mitigated the paroxysm of their going forth, this would have been motive enough."

Anecdotes and Illustrations

The Storm on the Sea of Galilee.—Who among us are forced to see the mightiness of God and the impotency of man so clearly as those who go down to the sea in ships and occupy their business in great waters? The storm arises, and they are tossed about at its mercy like a withered leaf, or drifted on helplessly into the very jaws of death. They cannot so much as stand upright before it, but reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, without being able to free themselves from its giant grasp. In such extremity what comfort there is in reflecting that our Blessed Lord Himself experienced this very form of danger, that He was once a storm-tossed voyager on the Galilean Sea, and that He quelled the winds and waters in their wildest uproar, saying, "Peace, be still." From that day forward the Christian should be as free from fear on ship-board as on dry land; his Lord has trodden both. Let the waves toss themselves, yet can they not prevail. The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; He can say to them, "Peace, be still," and He will say it except when some higher good is to be worked out by the whirlwind and the storm. Since our thoughts are directed by to-day's Gospel to the perils of the sea, it will not be unsuitable to tell you of a noble English ship, which was exposed nearly ninety years ago to the double danger of tempest and fire. God did not see fit to save the vessel, but He did preserve more than 500 of those who were on board in a most wonderful manner. Their history is as follows: "On the 19th of February, 1825, a good ship of 1350 tons, called the *Kent*, set sail from the Downs for Bengal and China, under the command of Captain Cobb. More than 300 soldiers of the 31st regiment were on board with their wives and children, making all together, with private passengers and the ship's crew, nearly 700 persons. They had a favourable voyage till they reached the Bay of Biscay, when a violent gale set in from the south-west. The swell was tremendous, and the vessel rolled fearfully, dashing about everything in the cabins. Still the sailors had good hopes that their ship would hold out against the storm, when a fresh enemy appeared. Three days after that south-west wind arose, at ten o'clock in the morning, one of the officers went down into the hold to see that all was safe, taking with him two of the sailors and a lighted lamp. He found a cask of spirits adrift, and sent the men for some pieces of wood to secure it, while he held the light in one hand and kept the cask steady with the other. Before they returned, however, the ship made a lurch and the officer staggered, so that he let the cask go and dropped the light. The cask suddenly stove, the spirits caught fire, and the whole place was instantly in a blaze. Captain Cobb at once set his men to pour water into the hold, and to try and stifle the flames with wet sails and hammocks, but all to little purpose. The fire ascended into the lowest tier of cabins, and volumes of heavy smoke, rising through the hatchways, rolled over every part of the ship. Only one expedient now presented itself, and that a desperate one, the opening of the lower ports to let in the water. This was done, though not before some poor creatures had been suffocated to death in the cabins. The waves rushed in and checked the flames, and though there was risk of sinking the vessel, yet she was preserved till means of safety were provided for the living souls she bore. The deck presented at this time a sight of horror. Everybody had now left the cabins, and more than 600 human beings were crowded on it, some searching wildly for their husbands, brothers, or friends, some indulging

in frantic grief, some loudly confessing that their sins had brought this judgment on them, and making vows of amendment if only their lives were now spared, while a few of the soldiers and sailors sullenly placed themselves directly over the powder magazine, with the hope, as they said, of being put quickly out of their sufferings when it blew up. But amid all this confusion some were quite calm and self-possessed. A party of the soldiers' wives and children took shelter in the after cabins on the upper deck, and prayed and read the Bible together, and when one of the officers spoke to the children about putting in practice what they had been taught in school, they answered, as the tears ran down their cheeks, 'Oh, sir, we are trying to remember it all, and we are praying to God!' Some of the officers were true Christian men, and they were strengthened by firm faith in God to go through their duties at this trying time. The same faith enabled some among the ladies to put away womanish fears, and prepare quietly for their expected end. One of them, when told that death seemed close at hand, fell on her knees, and clasping her hands, said, 'Even so, come Lord Jesus': and her sister began to read the Forty-sixth and other Psalms. All this time the fire was inwardly consuming the doomed ship, and the waves were dashing furiously against its sides. A man was at last sent up aloft to look out and see whether any vessel were in sight. He cast his eyes around, and presently waved his hat, exclaiming, 'A sail on the lee-bow,' on which the poor creatures on deck broke out into three cheers. Flags of distress were hung out and minute guns fired, but the former could not be seen at such a distance, and the gale was too violent to allow the guns to be heard. The volumes of smoke which burst from the *Kent* were its more effectual signals of distress, and when the other vessel perceived them she crowded all sail to her relief. The stranger proved to be the *Cambria*, a small brig bound for Vera Cruz. While she was approaching they were busy on board the *Kent* in getting out the boats and preparing to leave the burning ship. The women and children were to be sent off first, and then the men, the junior before the senior officers. Though help was now at hand there was still much danger, for the *Cambria* durst not come near for fear of being involved in an explosion, and the sea was so rough that it was not easy to get the women and children in or out of the boats. They had to drop them in by ropes, and sometimes the poor creatures were plunged again and again into the sea before they reached the boat. The first boat was filled, sent off, and its passengers all received into the *Cambria* at half-past two, but afterwards many lives were lost, especially of children. There were at first six boats going backwards and forwards, but in the course of the afternoon three of them were swamped. Captain Cobb, and the officers of the 31st regiment, devised every scheme they could for helping the men into the boats, but all were perilous on account of the stormy sea, and the soldiers, unaccustomed to being on ship-board, were timid and hung back. So there was more delay than should have been, and the sun had set long before the deck of the *Kent* was cleared. It was now a dreary place. The boats were threequarters of an hour absent between each trip, and the time seemed long to the poor fellows, who were crouching together in the dark, worn out with hunger and fatigue. After gloomy fits of silence they would break out into piteous lamentations, till at last one of the officers roused them with the words, 'Let us pray.' The prayer was short but earnest, and all seemed to join in it heartily. The darkness made the trips to the *Cambria* more and more difficult, and the officers had hard work in persuading the men to move. At last those who were left seemed paralysed with cold and horror, and refused to stir from their places. Nothing more could be done for them; so Captain Cobb and the remaining

officers left the vessel at 10 p.m. No sooner were they on board the *Cambria* than the flames darted up the masts and rigging of the *Kent*, and the ship was in a blaze. It burned brightly till two the next morning, when the magazine took fire: there was a terrible explosion, and all was still; but a small merchant barque picked up from the spars and rafters fourteen of the poor fellows who had stayed in the burning ship, and 554 were safe in the *Cambria*. That gallant little brig altered its course, and carried its fresh passengers straight into Falmouth Harbour, to receive from their countrymen the aid of which they stood so much in need, and to return thanks in God's house the next Sunday for the wonderful deliverance He had granted them."

Christ in the Storm.—There is a story of a Christian army officer at sea with his family in a storm. There was great terror among the passengers, but he was calm. His wife in her consternation chided him, saying that he ought to be concerned for her and the children, if not for himself, in such danger. He made no reply, but soon came to her with his sword drawn, and with a stern countenance pointed it at her heart. She was not the least alarmed, but looked up into his face with a smile. "What," said he, "are you not afraid when a drawn sword is at your breast?" "No," she replied; "not when I know it is in the hands of one that loves me." "And would you have me," he asked, "to be afraid of this tempest when I know it to be in the hand of my Heavenly Father Who loves me?"

An Evil Spirit Cast Out.—A gentleman was standing one morning on the platform of a railway station, holding by the hand a little girl, seven years old, named Alice. Presently a heavy tramping caused her to turn round when she saw one of the worst ruffians in the county on his way to prison. Alice stood and watched the man with a strange choking feeling in her throat and a pitiful look in her eyes. All at once the prisoner looked at her, and then turned suddenly away. But in another moment he glanced back as if he could not resist the pity of that childish face. His own features were working curiously, and then he turned his head in a way that made Alice think she had annoyed him. Going up almost close to him she said, "I didn't mean to plague you, poor man; only I'm sorry for you, and Jesus is sorry for you, too." The man was taken away to prison, but as days passed on the warders wondered that the dreaded prisoner gave no trouble. At last the chaplain asked how it was that he had turned out such a different man from what they expected. "It is a simple story," said the man. "A child was sorry for me, and she told me that Jesus was sorry for me, too, and her pity and His broke my heart."

Eastern Tombs.—The burying-places in the East frequently afford shelter to the weary traveller when overtaken by the night; and their recesses are also a hiding-place for thieves and murderers. There are tombs eight feet high, and twelve paces (or sixty feet) square, and they are sometimes turned into a family residence, and in one instance the sarcophagus, or stone coffin, was used as a provision chest.

The Loss of the Swine.—"In regard of the loss incurred by the owners of those swine, there is no more reason why this should have been laid hold of, and made a subject of cavil, than every murrain which causes cattle to die, or inundation that destroys the fruits of the field, or other natural calamity with which God chastens His children, punishes, or seeks to make contrite, the hearts of His enemies. For oftentimes God's taking away is, in a higher sense, a giving; it is the taking away of the meaner thing for the purpose of making receptive of the higher. Thus might it well have been intended here, however the sin of those Gadarenes hindered Christ's gracious designs." —*Trench.*

Dwelling among the Tombs.—"As I was not induced to accept the offers made me to remain at Tiberias, I left it early the following morning, coasted the lake, trod the ground celebrated for the miracle of the unclean spirit driven by our Saviour amongst the swine. The tombs still exist in the form of caverns, on the sides of the hills that rise from the shore of the lake, and from their wild appearance may well be considered the habitation of men exceeding fierce, possessed by a devil; they extend to a distance of more than a mile from the present town."—*Light's* "Travels in Egypt."

Among the Tombs.—"We went into one tomb, which was entirely cleared out, and now used as a private dwelling. Though the females of the family were within, we were allowed to enter, and descended by a flight of three steps, there being either a cistern or a deep sepulchre on the right of this descent. The portals and architrave were here perfectly exposed: the ornaments of the latter were a wreath and open flowers; the door also was divided by a studded bar and panelled, and the ring of the knocker remained, though the knocker itself had been broken off; the door, which was of the same size and thickness as those described, traversed easily on its hinges, and we were permitted to open and close it at pleasure. The tomb was about eight feet in height on the inside, as there was the descent of a steep step from the stone threshold to the floor. Its size was about twelve paces square; but as no light was received into it except by the door, we could not see whether there was an inner chamber, as in some of the others. A perfect sarcophagus still remained within, and this was now used by the family as a chest for corn and other provisions; so that this violated sepulchre of the dead had thus become a secure, a cool, and a convenient retreat to the living of a different race."—*Buckingham's* "Travels in Palestine."

Protection in the Tombs.—These burying-grounds frequently afford shelter to the weary traveller when overtaken by the night; and their recesses are also a hiding-place for thieves and murderers, who sally out from thence to commit their nocturnal depredations.

An Eastern Fable.—There is an Eastern fable of a boy having challenged his teacher to prove to him the existence of a God by working a miracle. The teacher, who was a priest, procured a large vessel filled with earth, in which he deposited a kernel in the boy's presence, and bade him pay attention. In the place where the kernel was put a green shoot soon appeared, the shoot became a stem, the stem put forth leaves and branches which soon spread over the whole apartment. It then budded with blossoms, which, dropping off, left golden fruit in their place, and in a short space of an hour there appeared a noble tree in the place of the little seed. The youth, overcome with amazement, exclaimed, "Now, I know there is a God, for I have seen His power!" The priest smiled at him, and said, "Simple child, do you only now believe? Does not what you have just seen take place in innumerable instances, year after year, only by a slower process? But is it the less marvellous on that account?"

Faith in Christ.—It was a touching answer of a Christian sailor, when asked why he remained so calm in a fearful storm, when the sea seemed ready to devour the ship. He was not sure that he could swim, but, he said, "Though I sink, I shall drop into the hollow of my Father's hand; for He holds all those waters there."—*Rev. W. Arnot.*

The Cry of Faith.—When the disciples were on the sea, and cried to their Master to save them, it was not the cry which saved them, but the power of Jesus; and their supplicatory cry was only a means of awakening their Master's compassion. So faith, instead of saving us in itself, saves us by interesting us in the mercy and ability of the Saviour. As one of our

homilies expresses it, faith sends us to Christ, as John the Baptist sent the people to Him from himself, saying, It is not I that take away your sins but Christ alone. Behold, yonder is the Lamb of God Which taketh away the sins of the world.—*Lewis.*

GERGESENES.—Matthew locates the miracle at Gergesa, Mark and Luke at Gadara. But the miracle could not have occurred at Gadara; for it is certain from the accounts that the place was near the shore of the lake, and there was a steep mountain near at hand, down which the herd of swine rushed, and were precipitated into the lake. Now Gadara does not meet any one of these necessary conditions. Nor was it in the country of the Gadarenes, for that country lay farther south. At Gersa, or Chersa, the lake is so near the base of the mountain, that the swine rushing madly down the almost perpendicular declivity could not stop, and as there is neither time nor space to recover on the narrow shelf between the base and the lake, they are crowded headlong into the water and perish. There is no bold cliff overhanging the lake except at this point, which is north of Tiberias; and here I suppose the miracle actually occurred.—*Thomson's* "Land and the Book."

Questions on the Gospel

1. What sea is here referred to? 2. What other names were given to it? 3. What was the disciples' cry? 4. What was our Lord's reply? 5. What are the lessons we may learn from this incident? 6. Where was the country of the Gergesenes? 7. Who met Jesus on landing? 8. What did they do and say? 9. What request did they make? 10. Why, do you think, did our Saviour allow the devils to enter the herd of swine? 11. What did the keepers of the swine do? 12. With what result?

Books of Reference

Bruce's "Miraculous Element in the Gospels"; *Trench* on "Miracles"; *Edersheim, Farrar* and *Geikie's* "Life of Christ"; *Smith's* "The Days of His Flesh"; "Cambridge Bible"; "Century Bible"; "Expositor's Bible"; "Biblical Illustrator"; *Thomson's* "Land and Book"; *George Adam Smith's* "Historical Geography of the Holy Land"; *Hasting's* "Dictionary of the Bible."

The Epistle

ROMANS XIII. 1-7.

Tribute Money

"*Doth not your Master pay tribute?*"—*St Matt. xvii.* 24.

First, I want you to tell me, What is tribute? The tribute spoken of here is money that was offered to the Temple by the Jews to pay the priests and Levites, and to buy sheep and oxen for sacrifice, and to keep the Temple clean and in good order. The little children in Scotland are accustomed to put a little piece of money into the plate, which is always placed at the church door every Sunday. These children are not obliged to give, but they do so from choice and from custom. You have seen people put money into boxes or plates when they have been in the house where God is worshipped. Are they obliged to give their money? Oh no, they do it because they like

to do it. What is done with the money? It goes to support the minister, to keep God's house clean and nice, and to pay for the lights we burn there in the dark evenings. Nearly every person who comes into God's house to worship Him gives his tribute to it, but everyone gives what he pleases. But in Jerusalem, when Jesus lived there, every Jew was expected to pay the same sum of money for the Temple and what is here called the tribute money was about one shilling and threepence, and neither Jesus nor Peter at this time, if they had put all that they had together, could make up this small sum. Jesus had very little money when He was on the earth. How true it is what Paul says about the Lord Jesus Christ, "That though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be made rich" (2 Cor. viii. 9).

Now we come to the second thing I want you to think about: That Jesus showed Peter that the priests had no claim upon Him for tribute money. This is what He means when He says, "Then are the children free." But the first thing that Jesus did was to let Peter know that He knew what the tribute-gatherer had said to him, and that He knew also what answer Peter had given him. The man who collected the tribute had asked Peter whether his Master paid it, and Peter had said Yes. And as soon as Peter came into the house, it is said that Jesus prevented him. What does that mean? Does it mean that He hindered Peter from going to pay the money? No, it cannot mean that. How could He prevent Peter from paying the money when Peter had no money to pay? Can anyone be said to prevent your giving money to your brother when you have not got a penny in the world? Do you not see that you must have the money before you can be prevented from giving it? Jesus could not prevent Peter from giving money when Peter had no money to give. Then it seems as if we had got something rather hard to understand. What is the word that makes it hard? Is it the word Jesus? No. Is it the word but? No. Is it the word him? No. It is the word prevented. But if you will pay attention, what is hard will soon become easy. You know the New Testament was not at first written in English, but in Greek, and when it was translated into English, about 300 years ago, the word prevent meant to go before. If you and your little sister had walked out, and you had gone before her to show her the way, you would have been said to prevent her. If two boys had lessons to say, the one who said his lesson first would be said to prevent the other boy. If you and I were both going to speak, and I spoke first, I should have been said to prevent you. There is a prayer in the Prayer Book which you may have heard. It says, "Prevent us, O Lord, in all our ways," which means, "Go before us, O Lord, as a shepherd goes before his sheep, or a guide goes before travellers to help them and show them the way." This seems to you a funny meaning for the word "prevent," does it not? We do not use it in that sense now. It has come to mean to hinder, because you know you do hinder people sometimes if you get before them. Now you can tell me how Jesus prevented Peter. He spoke before him. Peter was just going to tell his Master what he and the collector had been talking about, but there was no need for that, because He knew without being told. So Jesus spoke first, and asked Peter a question. What was it? "Of whom do the kings of the earth take tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?" What did He mean? He meant this: When people have a king or a queen to rule over them they pay money to them to enable them to live in a grand house, and have many servants and carriages, and live in a way such as it is proper for a king or queen to live in. But the king's own children don't pay money to him, do they? Oh no. They live with him in his palace and

enjoy his grandeur, because they are his children. Your father does not make you pay rent to him for living in his house, does he? No. But if you were a stranger, you would have to pay rent. If my landlord was my father and I was his only son, I am sure he would let me live in his house for nothing; but because I am not his son, I have to pay him rent. Now, the Temple was the house of Christ's Father, and Jesus Christ was His only Son; and the Temple belonged to Jesus Christ, for He says, "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father" (Matt. xi. 27). Then was it right to expect Jesus to pay money for a house that belonged to Him? No; Jesus said, "The Temple is My house, and just as a king's children are free to live in his house without payment, so am I free to use My Father's house without paying tribute."

But notice, thirdly, That Jesus did pay the tribute. Why was this? Why did He take the trouble to send Peter to the sea to get the money, when He had just before said, "Then are the children free"? He Himself gives us the answer. Here it is: "Nevertheless, lest they be offended." Jesus means that He did not wish people to think that He thought lightly of the house of His Father, and therefore He said, "Go, Peter, to the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh"—and there, you know, was enough money to pay both for Peter and for Jesus.

Now we are coming to what I know you have been wanting to hear about, and I kept this till last because I knew you would like to think about it, and tell me what made it a miracle.

I. When Men go out to Fish, are they always sure that they shall catch some.—No. Do you remember what Peter said the first time Jesus met him by the seaside, and asked him to lend Him his boat for a pulpit? We are told in the fifth chapter of St Luke's Gospel that Jesus told him to launch out into the deep after the sermon was finished, and He would pay him in fishes for lending Him the boat. And what was Peter's answer? "Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing." All the night he had been fishing and had not caught a single fish! No, not so much as a sprat or a little fish of any kind. Peter was a good fisherman, yet he could not always get the fish into his net. Do any of you boys ever try to fish with a rod and line? If you do, you know that sometimes you stand a whole hour before you get a single bite, and then perhaps it is only a bite. The other day I tried to fish for three hours, and only caught one tiny fish! I need not tell you that you cannot whistle a fish on to the hook. He will only come when he likes. But you will notice that Peter caught this fish at once; there was no waiting. Perhaps the man was waiting for the tribute money, and the fish came up in time to pay it. He came at the very moment when Jesus said he would to the hand of Peter. Was not this wonderful? This was a part of the miracle.

II. The Fish had the Money in his Mouth.—That was a miracle too. There have been some wonderful things found inside of fish. Do you remember to have heard of a man who was once inside a fish? What was his name? Jonah. But the fish did not carry him in his mouth, did he? No, he swallowed him. I have heard another true story of the skeleton of a soldier which was found all dressed in his armour, with his helmet, boots, and spurs, in the stomach of a large fish. And I have heard, and I think the story was true, of a fisherman who found a very valuable gold ring in a fish's stomach. But this fish held the money in his mouth. Just as you carry the money in your hand when you are going to the shop, to have it all ready to pay with, so the fish kept the money in his mouth to have it ready by the time Peter came. Do you not think that that was a miracle?

III. Then the First Fish that came to Peter's Hook had the Money.—There are many stars in Heaven, and many sands on the seashore, and I don't know but that there are as many fish in the sea as there are stars in Heaven, or grains of sand upon the seashore. There are certainly many millions. But of all the fish that were swimming in the Sea of Galilee when Peter went down there, this fish was the only one that had money in his mouth, and he was the one that came to Peter's hook. This was a part of the miracle too.

IV. The Fish had exactly the Money that was needed, and no more.—It was a piece of silver called a stater, worth about half-a-crown, which was caught to pay the tribute both for Jesus and Peter.

Now we will count up the things that made this a miracle. 1. Because the fish came directly Peter cast his hook. 2. Because he held the money in his mouth. 3. Because he was the first fish to bite Peter's hook. 4. Because he had exactly the money that was needed, and no more.

Now let us see what we can learn from this history. Does it not show us, first of all, how very poor Jesus was? Some of you have not much money. Some of your fathers and mothers are not very rich. But I think if the tax collector came to your father and asked him only for fifteenpence he would be able to pay it. But Jesus had not even fifteenpence. More than that, you know that He tells us Himself that He had no home. "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head" (Matt. viii. 20). Sometimes it troubles us that we are not richer than we are. You see boys and girls dressed in better clothes than your father can afford to buy for you, and living in a nicer house than yours is, and sometimes this makes you feel a little discontented. I suppose we are all of us, men and women quite as much as boys and girls, inclined sometimes to wish we were just a little richer than we are. But I think we cannot have a better cure for our discontent than the thought that Jesus was a very poor man—much poorer, I think, than any one of us. And then, you see, we never need be ashamed of being poor. Sometimes a little girl has to go to school in a shabby frock, or a boy with a patch on the knee of his trousers, and some of their schoolfellows, whose fathers have a little more money, laugh at the poor boy or girl who cannot dress so well as they can. Never mind that, dear children; remember always that the Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour, was Himself once a poor boy, was the Son of a very poor woman.

But, secondly, we learn that, though Jesus was a poor man, He was the Son of God. You remember how we said just now that Jesus prevented Peter—that is, that He began to talk to Peter about what the collector of the tribute had been saying before Peter had time to speak about it. He was not there when Peter and the man were talking, was He? No. Had anyone told Him? No. Yet He knew all about it. Does not this remind us of what David says to God in Psalm cxxxix.?—"O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising, Thou understandest my thought afar off. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether." This is just what the Bible tells us Jesus knows about people. We read in the second chapter of St John's Gospel, at the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth verses, that "He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man." And here we see how true those words are. Jesus did not need Peter to tell Him what he was thinking about; He knew it all beforehand. Therefore Jesus is God. Then, again, if Jesus had not been God, how could He have told Peter about the fish with the money in his

mouth? Who made that fish come to Peter's hook? Was it not Jesus? and does it not show us that He is Lord of all living creatures, and that they all obey and serve Him? He made them all. We are told that "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made" (John i. 3). This is another proof that Jesus was God. I need not tell you why it was that Jesus, although He was God, lived a poor man upon this earth. The verse that we read at the beginning told us that "for our sakes He became poor."

Dear children, do not let us forget that it was to make us rich in goodness, rich in all the glories of Heaven, that the Lord of glory became a poor man. If we are poor, we are so because we cannot help it. But Jesus need not have been a poor and suffering man. It was His own choice. Let us, in return, choose to be His children, trust in Him and love Him for all that He has done and suffered "for our sakes."

"Hold Fast"

"*Hold fast that which is good.*"—1 *Thess. v.* 21.

I. Illustrate hold fast. Ask who can tell the meaning. What can they hold fast? Things given them—money, or articles entrusted to their care by mother or others—hold fast for fear they should lose or have them taken away. Things we like or care for we do not want to lose—want to keep—hold them fast. Some things very easily lost (small piece of money, etc.)—some seldom found again (little bird flying away out of its cage, etc.).

II. Repeat text. What does text tell us to hold fast? Good things. What do we say of things that are not at all good? Bad. Should we hold fast bad things? No, have nothing to do with them. Children sometimes get and hold fast that which is bad instead of that which is good. Do you know any bad things children get hold of? I will tell you some. There are bad words. They hear others say them, and perhaps say them too; so, instead of forgetting them, they hold them fast in their minds. Then there are bad ways (e.g. lying, disobedience, etc.) and bad tempers. Children know these are bad, and yet often they will not leave them off, but hold them fast. Whatever we know is bad we should never hold fast.

III. That which is Good.—What good things can children hold fast? All the good they are taught in their schools or at home—good things they hear or read—texts, hymns, lessons, etc. Some children repeat their lessons nicely in school, and listen to what the teacher says; but when they leave the school they think of something else, and talk about something else, and very likely forget all the good they have learnt. That is not holding fast—that is losing what is good—those who want to do right will think of what they are taught, and so be able to hold it fast.

IV. We must, most of all, try to hold fast what God tells us in the Bible. God tells us much that He wants us to know there; and if we do not attend, or forget, we shall never know what we ought—what He is—what He thinks about us—what He has done for us—and what He wishes us to do. These are the best things to hold fast, and if we lose them we can get nothing in all the world that is worth so much or that will do us so much good.

Habit

"*Learn to do well.*"—*Isa. i.* 17.

Boys and girls, you can obey this text by trying to do well to-day. and to-morrow, and the next day. It is the same as learning to skate. You fall,

and rise again. You fall, but try again. After a little you can stand, and then can push out one foot, and by and by the other, until at last away you go, gliding over the ice like the wind.

Learning to do well is like learning to swim. You wade into the water, but not very far, for fear you will drown. You try to swim, but sink. You try again, and do a little better. You swallow a good deal of water; it gets into your ears and eyes and nose, but you keep on splashing, and finally can swim. So you must keep on doing well until you learn how, and it has become a habit. A habit is something which we have. That is what the word means. It often becomes something which has us.

A habit is formed in the same way that paths or roads are. You often see people "cutting across fields." Where they do this, a narrow strip of grass about a foot or fourteen inches wide will soon be trodden to death, and a narrow strip of ground, about the same width beneath it, will be trodden hard, and that is a path. It is made by being walked over again, and again, and again. You can soon get into the habit of doing a thing if you will do it over and over, many times. The more you do it the easier it will become, just as a path grows wider and plainer the more it is travelled. It is hard to keep people from going across fields after a path is once made; and so it is hard to stop doing what we have fallen into the habit of doing.

It will not be easy for you to "do well" after you have once learned to do wrong. Bad habits are like the ruts made by carriage wheels in country roads: they hold people fast. I once read of an old man who had crooked fingers. When a boy his hand was as limber as yours. He could open it easily, but for fifty years he drove a stage, and his fingers got so in the habit of shutting down on the reins and whip that they finally stayed shut. The old man can never open his hand again. Boys, if you do not wish to fall into the habit of swearing, drinking and smoking, never swear, drink, or smoke at all. If you do these things even a few times, they may become habits and hold you fast. "Learn to do well," but "abhor that which is evil."

The Three Voices of Conscience

"*Conscience bearing witness.*"—*Rom. ii.* 15.

Even boys and girls know the difference between right and wrong. They understand the meaning of those simple but wonderful words—"I ought" and "I ought not." This is the chief glory of human nature, and the greatest gift we possess. The brute beasts have all the five senses of sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch just as we have. In many they are more highly developed than in us. And they have some slight powers of mind, too; they can remember things; they can put two and two together; they can reason from one thing to another. But they have no "moral sense"—i.e. they do not know the difference between right and wrong. And what raises us so high above them is just this power to distinguish right from wrong. We call it "conscience." It is the *knowing* part of us. It is what warns us against wrongdoing, rebukes us when we have sinned, and encourages us when we obey its commands. Of these three voices of conscience I will now speak.

I. Conscience has a Warning Voice.—A very ancient fable tells how a certain prince had a very precious ring. It was not more massive than other rings, nor was it set with more precious jewels. But it had this wonderful property, that whenever he who wore it thought of doing what was wrong it pinched his finger. It was a danger signal which always warned him against evil. Now, conscience is like that ring. When we are on the

brink of wrongdoing, it checks us. Many years ago, a little boy in petticoats, about four years old, was returning home from a walk with his father through the farm. On the way he was attracted by a very beautiful flower, growing in a small pond, and stayed to look at it. And at its root he saw a little spotted tortoise, sunning himself in the shallow water. He lifted the stick he had in his hand to strike it, as he had seen other boys kill birds and squirrels for sport. But, all at once, something checked his arm, and a voice within him said, clear and loud, "It is wrong." He was quite startled, and forgot all about the flower and the tortoise, and hastened home to tell his mother, and ask her what the voice was. She was moved to tears by his artless prattle, and took him in her arms, and said, very solemnly: "Some men call it conscience; but I prefer to call it the voice of God in the soul of man. If you listen and obey it, then it will speak clearer and clearer, and always guide you right; but if you turn a deaf ear or disobey, then it will fade out little by little, and leave you all in the dark and without a guide. Your life depends upon heeding this little voice." In after years, when the child had become famous as a bold and fearless man (his name was Theodore Parker), he said that no other event in his life had made so deep and lasting an impression upon him. And his mother's words point a moral for us all. Take heed to the warning voice of conscience, obey it always, and your life shall be one of safety and peace.

II. Conscience has a Rebuking Voice.—If we disobey its warning, and do what is wrong, conscience upbraids us. It makes us uncomfortable and ill at ease. We are afraid that someone saw us, or that someone will find us out. We do not like to be alone or to think. We are in fear of God's displeasure. And thus conscience "makes cowards of us all." If its rebuking makes us sorry, and leads us to try and make amends for our wrongdoing, it will cease to disturb us. But if we are obstinate, gradually we forget its rebukes, until some quiet moment quickens our memory, and allows its voice to be heard. Very few people hear the town clocks strike in the daytime, when the roar of traffic and noise of business fill the ear. But at night, when all is still and quiet, when no carts are passing and little work is doing, every stroke of the hour is heard. So it is with the voice of conscience. We may drown its tone of rebuke by work and play, and we may fancy it is silenced; but when we are quiet and alone, and have time to think, we shall hear it crying shame upon our sin. When men have been guilty of great crimes, the rebuking voice has sometimes maddened them with intense agony. There was once a very cruel king, who gave the command for many thousands of people to be put to death. His conscience forbade him, but he disobeyed its voice. And ever after he was haunted by the memory of his wickedness, and when he lay dying he told his physician: "Asleep and awake I see their mangled forms before me. They drip with blood; they make hideous faces at me; they point to their wounds and mock me." That was the punishment of conscience. It made his death one of awful agony, and it went with him into "the silent land." Men call it "*remorse*," and its sting is too terrible for words to describe. Then how careful should we be not to disobey the warning which is enforced by such dire punishment!

III. Conscience has an Approving Voice.—When we do what is right conscience has no whip for us, but pleasant words of encouragement. So long as we obey its commands it makes sweet music within our souls, it gives us bright and happy feelings, and it makes our lives full of joy. George Whitefield, one of the most famous preachers that ever lived, was once staying at an inn with a friend, and after they had gone to bed they heard a

dreadful noise—men were gambling and swearing and talking very wickedly indeed. Whitefield said, "I must get up and speak with those men; their talk is terrible. So he arose and dressed and went down to them. But they only laughed at him, and mocked him, and abused him; they would not listen to a word he said. When he returned to the bedroom his friend said to him: "Well, what did you get for your trouble?" and the good man answered: "I have got a *soft pillow*." He meant that his mind was at rest, and his heart at peace, because his conscience told him he had done what was right. The approval of conscience is the highest and best of all blessings. It is the secret of true happiness. The wise and good prize it above everything else. If a man were as rich and wise as King Solomon, a guilty conscience would make him miserable. And if we are as poor as beggars, the answer of a good conscience will give us peace. No melody can be sweeter than its approving voice.

Of these three voices the last is best. The warning of conscience is sharp—its rebuke is stinging; but its approval is "sweeter than honey or the honeycomb." Will you ask Jesus to help you to be obedient to its warning that so you may enjoy its approval? It is far more important to win that than to earn praise of men. The Russians have a proverb that "a horse may run quickly, but he can't run away from his tail." So, too, a man may travel very far, but he can't get away from his conscience. Conscience is a faithful companion which sticketh closer than a brother. You cannot rid yourself of its presence. If, therefore, all the riches of the world were offered you on condition that you would commit a single sin, you would be foolish as well as wicked to accept it. The prize would cost more than its worth. Nothing can make up for the loss of a quiet conscience.

—*Rev. G. H. James.*

The Soldier in the Snow

"*Honour all men.*"—1 *Peter ii.* 17.

Where are the roses in winter?

What a bright and lovely thing is a rose-garden all covered with leaves and buds and blossoms from end to end, in every shade of pink and crimson and gold, which both men and children can see and smell and pluck.

But how very unlovely it is when the ground is frozen, bitter winds sweep through the air, and the sky is low and dull; when the fields are broad sheets of snow, and rivers are ice. Where are the roses then? There is nothing to be seen but leafless sticks; nothing to pluck but sharp, prickly thorns. Yet you know that these are *rose-trees*. And the gardener knows it and values them and treasures them, even in all their bareness and ugliness, for hidden away in their heart of hearts they contain the graceful leaves of those loveliest of flowers; and when the *power* comes—yes, that is it, the power—when the power comes, when the ground is soft and the air is warm, and the sun is pouring its floods of golden glory out of a summer sky, then their hearts will stir within them, the lovely things that lie hidden there will creep and creep up the stems, and through the buds and out into the open air, and unfold themselves, till little children's eyes can see and their hands can reach and pluck them, and their little nostrils smell all the sweet scent their loveliness contains.

They are ugly now. But for all that, the gardener is putting straw about their roots, dunging about them, and tilling them. He does not judge by their outward appearance. He knows what is in the hearts of them, and he wants to keep their hearts alive; if he has their hearts, he knows that he shall have their unfolded flowers soon. He loves them, and values them, and cares for them, because of the glory which shall be revealed in them.

And God so loves the world. It is full of unlovely looking characters, hard and prickly and ugly as the frozen rose-sticks. But be they to our views and feelings what they may, He values all men; He *honours* all men, He *loves* all men.

And He bids us try to do the same; for everybody, even the ugliest, hardest, and most unlovable-looking people have hidden down away in their hearts things beautiful alike to God and man, but seen just now only by God. The whole world is a garden of the Lord's; but in dull cold winter-time God knows what it can be and will be.

And this is what I want you to understand and enjoy: that God knows what is in the heart of man, and this is the reason why, with infinite patience, He cares for and tends and loves the world.

But you will see what I mean by these hidden blossoms in the souls of men by a story. It is now just a hundred long years since it happened. Napoleon Bonaparte—a hugely wicked man—went with tens of thousands of soldiers into Russia to steal from the Russians their towns and villages, to have them for himself. But he did not get what he wanted; for difficulties arose, and he had more to fight than could be fought with guns and swords, or the bravest of men. The Russians fought against him, and these he could beat. But Heaven and earth fought against him, and these foes were too great for him. The city in which he would have housed his soldiers caught fire, and the fire rapidly spread. House after house, street after street, it spread, till every street and every house was ablaze, and the city became one vast fire. Of course the soldiers fled from such a place with all speed.

But where? There was no place to fly to, except their own homes in their own country far away; for all the neighbouring towns and cities were Russian, and of course hated an army which had come to steal their country from them. And, worst of all, the time was winter; they could not camp out of doors; and such a winter as has seldom been. So there was no hope for them but away in their far-off homes; the fire had destroyed their only safe shelter besides; there was no help for it.

So thousands of men set out on a long and terrible journey which was to take them there. Then began a story of suffering past all power to imagine.

They were in a strange land, yet there were no roads nor paths to follow; what roads and paths there were in its vast uncultivated sweeps of land lay deeply hidden in snow. There were not even people to be found to ask the way, nor friendly cottages to offer a moment's rest or warmth. The few straggling woodmen's huts which might lie here and there by their track, like the roads, were buried in snow. No shop offered the means of getting even a crust of bread. They could get no water, not one drop, to quench their raging thirst; springs and streams were all frozen. So cold was it that melted ice scorched and blistered their mouths like burning coal. Freezing winds searched through their clothes and flesh, chilling their very bone to its marrow.

Cold and hungry and thirsty as they were, every mile in the soft sinking snow added the misery of wearying limbs; yet must they hold on, for to halt for even a little rest they knew was certain death. Hour after hour, through long days and longer nights, they struggled on towards home. Pitiless snows fell in thick, blinding storms, settling on them in great masses, adding heavy weight to carry, soaking them to the skin. And with their wearying load, every step sank deeper into the soft, hampering road. Their aching legs swelled; their soaked feet broke into sores; their lips split and bled, their ears became raw; and strong men cried out like children in pain.

Every hour, through days and nights, to one after another the suffering and

struggle proved too much; they fell into a deadly sleep and dropped torpid upon the road.

One of these was a little drummer-boy. He had a sturdy little heart and had made long and manful efforts to keep up with his big and stronger companions. The burden of his drum, light as it was, was rather against him; but he had kept his legs till now. He could do so no longer. He stopped, staggered a little, dropped his drum, reeled a second, and then fell stretched upon it. It had come to be his turn to die.

His party moved on, doubtless a little sad to leave a mere child to die; but times were stern, and they had enough to do to take care of themselves.

A second party came along the track, frozen, disabled, haggard as the rest. Some looked at the little drummer, some half-stopped, but all passed on. Everybody was silent.

A third party staggers up, frozen, disabled, haggard as the rest. But one of this party looks at the boy and stops. His face is flat, pale, swollen; his big lips look sour; his brow is low and frowning. He seems wearier and more haggard than others, and there is something about his desperate looks which would have alarmed you. His life, you would have thought, must have been a very terrible one. And very likely it had been; for he bears a wretched name among his soldier companions, who themselves are not over particular.

But this one man stops by the boy.

The sight of the little fellow, after all his brave strugglings, lying there stretched upon his drum, left to die, is too much for him. He feels something choking rise in his throat. He cannot, and come what will he will not, leave him. In a passion for the boy, he bends forward, lifts him up, and rouses him.

Unable to speak, he makes signs to some who are passing to give him a helping hand, and the boy—drum and all, for the bewildered little fellow is clinging to his drum—is hoisted up on this man's back.

It was a little while before he could quite steady himself to start. Then, with raw feet and aching limbs he set out, himself and his new burden, to do the rest of the weary way home. And who could say what would be the end? And on they tramped.

And how did it end? Long before the terrible journey was all over, many of those who had seen and passed that outstretched boy on the roadside themselves were exhausted and done, and fell down upon the snow and died. Only a very, very few of all that set out from that burning city for home ever reached their journey's end. But whether because of the extra warmth which came from those two little legs dangling down over each side of his chest—for two cold bodies can make each other warmer—or whether it was because of the extra thrill and power which so noble an enthusiasm imparted to his failing heart—giving warmth and strength to his spirit and his limbs and to all that made him a man, I cannot say; but be this as it may, you will be very glad to know that among that very, very few, the man with the drummer-boy on his shoulders was one. He and his burden both reached home. You may fancy, without any telling of mine, what gratitude, wonder, and joy there was among the brothers and sisters and father and mother of the saved little man. But the man that carried him had bliss too, and I fancy most of the bliss.

Perhaps to have passed the fallen child would not have been wicked. We can hardly *blame* those men who feared to increase the awful weariness, difficulties, and dangers of their terrible lot; but if we cannot blame them, neither can we admire them. Their conduct might be human, it was not Divine. The man who thinks most, not of himself, but of another; the man that *must try to save*, even if in the trial he lays down his own life, he it is who is lovely, lovable, and Divine. For his is the disposition of the beautiful and

Blessed God as seen in Christ. "*He* saved others, Himself He could not save." That is why even among despised and outcast people Jesus found friends.

And I have told you the story of this particular man because till that hour he had been counted bad, the worst of his set. Yet all the while he contained, hidden away down in his heart of hearts, loveliness, lovely both to God and man. It lay there waiting for the power to touch it into life and bring it out to sight; and pity did it.

Perhaps, after it was all over, the rose was out in the cold again, and the roots won back the brightness and perfume beneath the hardened ground; but, if that were so, it was a rose-tree still.

Oh, my dear children, love everybody! Honour all men! Secret glories lie in them all, however hard it may be to believe it. God believes it, and that should be enough.—*Rev. B. Waugh.*

Our Duty to Our Rulers

"*Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers,*" *etc.—Rom. xiii.* 1-7.

At our Saviour's coming a new Kingdom was set up in the world, the Kingdom of Heaven; and there was some danger that the subjects of this Kingdom would think themselves exempt from obedience to civil governors, as being subject only to Christ their King, or to such as were appointed rulers under Him. There was the more danger of this, inasmuch as even the Jews before His coming had doubted whether it were lawful for them to submit to the authority of heathen rulers, and contribute to their support by the payment of taxes. "Is it lawful," was their question to our Saviour, "to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not?"

To guard against this danger, the Apostles in many places (and nowhere more plainly than in this passage) enforce the duty of submission to the government of any country in which we are living, in all things not sinful. Let every soul be subject unto the "higher powers." The expression is very emphatic: every Christian, of whatever degree, those who are called to any spiritual rule or ministry, as well as the Christian people, let them be subject to the higher powers. And when we remember that the Romans, to whom St Paul wrote, were living under the government of Nero, one of the most cruel of the heathen emperors, what excuse will there be for the disloyalty of those whose happiness it is to live under a mild and Christian government?

As the ground of our duty in this respect, he lays down the great principle, that civil government is the ordinance of God. "There is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God." Obedience to a law of infinite wisdom and goodness is the happiness of Angels in Heaven; and men can be happy upon earth, only in proportion as they find freedom in obedience. Civil government (and the same remark applies to parental authority) has been ordained by God for the great benefit of man, in rewarding the good, and restraining and punishing the wicked: and also as a type or image of that perfect rule in Heaven. The ruling "power" is the "minister of God to thee for good." And again, "he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil": "he beareth not the sword in vain." These expressions may be applied to every form of civil government; and they also show, that the power of our earthly rulers extends to the punishment of death.

Our duty therefore to our rulers, whatever be the form of government under which we live, and whatever be our opinion of the personal character of those who bear sway, is, to regard them as the ministers of God, and remember Whose authority they have; with a thankful sense of the blessings

we enjoy through this ordinance of God, and a deep reverence for law or government in all its enactments and all its representatives. What would be the condition of society, if every man did that which is right in his own sight? or rather, how impossible would it be for society to exist. In proportion as law is honoured and obeyed, the good are protected and the wicked are restrained, and the amount of human happiness is increased. The very worst law and the most tyrannical government is far better than lawlessness. How excellent are those words of one of the truest sons of our Church!—"Of law there can be no less acknowledged than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world: all things in Heaven and earth do her homage, the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempted from her power; both Angels and men, and creatures of what condition soever, though each in different sort and manner, yet all with uniform consent, admiring her as the mother of their peace and joy.

Such being then the general outline of our duty, the particular instances of it are such as these:—

I. We should obey those in authority "not only for wrath, but also for conscience's sake"; not only from fear of punishment, but from a conscientious sense of duty. "Whosoever resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God." Should any command indeed be given inconsistent with the duty which we owe to God, we should obey God rather than man; but if it be only doubtful whether the command is thus at variance with a higher rule, then the express duty of obedience to lawful power should outweigh with us mere scruples of conscience. And before we withhold from an earthly ruler that obedience which, as a general rule, is due to him, we should reflect much on the responsibility we incur, and be quite sure that our conduct can be justified by calm and sound reasoning. In our days, and in that happy country where the providence of God has placed us, such instances are happily of very rare occurrence.

II. We should cheerfully yield the tribute of fear and honour to our rulers, by respecting their persons, and encouraging all loyal and dutiful attachment to them. A Christian should "fear the Lord and the king: and not meddle with them that are given to change." He should not allow himself to speak evil of dignities. Not only should he be quiet in the land, but should give his whole influence in favour of that wise subordination of ranks which is clearly contemplated in Scripture, and that decent respect to superior station which is withheld only by men of proud and turbulent mind.

III. We should cheerfully contribute such portions as the law demands from us, in the way of tribute or taxes to the public revenue. Without such contributions or imposts, no government can be carried on; nor can any taxes be discovered which will not give dissatisfaction to some persons in the State. Our duty in this respect is to pay willingly what is lawfully demanded of us; thankfully remembering the blessings we derive from government; and also to discountenance every evasion of the laws which regulate the public revenue, by smuggling, or buying smuggled goods. There is as much dishonesty in defrauding the public revenue by such evasions of the law, as by robbing a private purse; and they who allow themselves in such practices, little reflect what vice they sanction and generate by giving encouragement to those underhand and illegal dealings.—*Rev. W. J. Trower, D.D.*

Duties of a Christian Child

"*Soberly, righteously, and godly.*"—*Titus ii.* 12.

You will remember, I dare say, that in the Gospels our Lord compares the Christian Church to a large house full of servants. Every servant in the house has his own appointed place to fill, and his own appointed work to do: but the Master has gone away into a far country, and left the time of his return uncertain. He *will* return some day; that is all that the servants know. Suddenly, when many of them perhaps are not at all expecting to see him, he will reappear in the house, and call everyone round him, that they may give an account of their doings, and receive their reward. Those who have acted according to his directions, he will praise and advance; but those who have disobeyed his orders, and been negligent or presumptuous, he will severely punish.

And if you remember this comparison, I think you will not find it very difficult to understand it. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the Master of the household, and we who profess and call ourselves Christians are His servants. He has given to each of us something to do: yes, even to the very youngest amongst us. But He Himself has gone away into Heaven. By and by—we do not know when—He will come back again, and examine our work, and we must be ready to receive Him. And we must so live now, as that we shall not be found "ashamed" before Him at His coming.

I am not sure that we, in the present day, think as much as we should do about this second coming, or Second Advent, as it is sometimes called, of the Lord Jesus Christ. But it is very frequently mentioned in Holy Scripture: and we are told that a considerable number of the early Christians, if not all of them, were always expecting to see the Saviour return to earth. They knew that He might come back at any time, and they hoped that He would come back in *their* time. He did not do so, of course; but they were right in constantly looking out for Him: and the habit of mind into which they were thus brought, made them far more careful, and watchful, and diligent, and earnest, and holy, than they would otherwise have been.

Now in the passage to which my text belongs, St Paul is speaking about "the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." He refers to the second coming of Christ, and he bids us to be always looking out for it, and to be always prepared for it. I say, "he bids us"; for though he is really writing to Titus, and to the disciples of that day, yet what he says is intended for Christians of all periods: and surely if it was necessary to be ready in the Apostle's time for Christ's coming, it is even more necessary now, when nearly two thousand years have passed away, and we must be nearer, by all those years, to the day of His appearing and Kingdom. "And meantime," says the Apostle—I am not quoting his exact words—"meantime, whilst you are looking out for the Saviour's return, and expecting a new state of things, see that you live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present state of things. To do so, is the duty of all—the duty of servants and masters, the duty of young and old, the duty of all classes and all ranks. We, who are Christians, are under obligation to live soberly, righteously, and godly, looking for the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Let us consider, then, what the Apostle means by these three words. We will examine them in order; for they will teach us something about our Christian duty—about the way in which we ought to conduct ourselves in that position in the world in which we are at present placed.

I. First, then we will consider the word "soberly." A "sober-minded" man, in the language of Scripture, means a man whose mind, or spiritual part, is in a sound or healthy state; for the soul may be diseased as well as the body, and the soul may be healthy as well as the body. Now what is it more than anything else that tends to make our bodies unsound? Excess. If we eat too much, or drink too much, or indulge ourselves in what is unwholesome, simply because it is nice, we are sure to be taken ill, and to suffer for it, sooner or later. God has so made our bodies, that we must be temperate, in order to be healthy. A wise man, then, who wishes to avoid disease, controls and checks his appetite. He says "No" to himself, when perhaps he is disposed to take a little more. He stops at a certain point, and will go no further. And what applies to our bodies, applies also to our souls. If you and I wish to be sound and healthy in soul, we must be careful to acquire the habit of controlling our inclinations and desires, and of keeping them always within proper bounds. The word "soberly" then, points to self-restraint. And when the Apostle tells us that we are to live "soberly" in this present world, he intends us to understand that it is part of our duty to secure a firm control over our natural appetites, just as a driver carefully holds in a spirited and restive horse, and will not allow it at any time to run away with him.

You will see, of course, that this is something different from abstaining from what is wrong or sinful. With what is sinful, we must positively have nothing whatever to do. If God's Word, or our own conscience, says "Do not go there," we must not go to the place. But sometimes God's Word says, "You may go there; but you must not stay too long, and you must not go too far": and then the case is altered. What we have to do under these circumstances is, not to abstain altogether; but to check and restrain and control ourselves, lest we should err by excessive indulgence.

For instance. It is not wrong to read story-books, fairy tales, and things of that kind. In children, the imagination requires to be fed. But if you should grow so fond of imaginative reading as to lose all interest in more solid things, such as history, languages, and your other studies; and more especially still, if you should come, through indulgence in such reading, to care little for your Bibles, you would be acting very unwisely and very wrongly; you would be sinning by excess; you would be disobeying the Apostle's precept to live "soberly." It is not necessary to mention other instances. You will easily imagine them for yourselves. But this I must say, that if you happen to like a thing much, you must be careful not to like it *too* much, lest your appetite for it should get the better of you. By liking good eating too much, and not controlling themselves—men become gluttons; by liking wine too much, and not controlling themselves—men become drunkards; by liking gaiety and excitement too much, and putting no restraint upon themselves—people become "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God": and often pass on through Time without making any preparation for Eternity. Be on your guard, then, against excess of any kind. "Enough" is a good master; but "too much" is a tyrant. Remember that a child may indulge in excess, and a child may exercise self-restraint and self-control.

And I will tell you what is a very sad result of excessive indulgence: that we come to think more of the gift than we do of the good and gracious God Who bestows it. I remember once seeing two children, a boy and a girl, poor ragged little creatures, probably brother and sister, standing outside a pastrycook's and gazing hungrily in at the tempting delicacies: the tarts, and cakes, and jellies, and other things displayed in the window. Now I thought that they might never have tasted a bun in their lives, and so I went in and bought them one apiece, that they might have the pleasure for once, and came

out and gave them to them. You would have expected, of course, that they would have thanked me, or at least looked at me gratefully: but they did not. They only looked at the buns. And when I held the buns out, they snatched at them greedily, and turned away to devour them without giving even a single glance or a single word to me. They quite overlooked me in their enjoyment of the food. The giver was forgotten in his gift. Now that was not nice, was it? I was displeased, or rather perhaps I should say I was made sad by the conduct of the two little children; for it reminded me of the unthankful way in which we, who ought to know better, clutch at the gifts of our Heavenly Father, and lose sight of Him, forget Him, think nothing about Him, whilst we are greedily enjoying the pleasures which He has lovingly provided for us. I know of no way of securing ourselves against this danger, unless we practise that living "soberly" of which the Apostle speaks, and are careful never to allow ourselves to like anything too much.

II. Let us turn now to the word "righteously." The expression refers obviously to our duty to others. And what is that duty? To give everybody that which is due to them; or, in other words, to pay everybody that which we owe. Now we owe to our superiors, respect; to those set in authority over us, obedience and submission; and to our equals and inferiors, fair and kindly dealing. And when we pay these debts—for we may call them debts—we are acting "righteously," as the Apostle tells us to do. And I dare say that many of you have noticed that, in this respect as well as in others, we have a Perfect Pattern proposed to us in the Lord Jesus Christ. When He was a boy, He did not set Himself above the old, learned men in the Temple, and lecture them; but sat at their feet, "both hearing them and asking them questions." And when He went back to Nazareth, although He was the Son of God, He was subject to Joseph and to Mary His mother, and obeyed their directions. And when He had entered upon His ministry, and begun to preach, He told the people to listen respectfully to and to mind what the Scribes and Pharisees said, because they sat in Moses' seat. And when His enemies came to Him, tempting Him and seeking to entrap Him, He bid them render to Cæsar what belonged to Cæsar, as well as to render to God what belonged to God. You see how He always acted "righteously." And you are to imitate Him. It is not acting like a Christian child if you are disrespectful to those who are older than yourself, and make fun of them behind their backs; it is not acting like Jesus if you are disobedient to your father and mother. Remember that you have to give all their due, and respect is due from you to those who are older, and especially to those who are placed in authority over you. And then, as to your equals and companions. Righteousness with regard to them, is *fairness*: just and honourable and equitable dealing. If you wish to live as the Apostle bids you, you will be strictly fair in all things. Should you have to divide anything between yourself and another, you will not take the best share for yourself, but you will divide the thing equally. In your games you will never take an ungenerous advantage. In school examinations you will not copy, or use a book slily under the desk. If you are writing for an essay-prize, you will not get someone else to polish your sentences; or if you are contending for a drawing-prize, you will not ask an elder brother or sister to touch the picture up. You feel it would not be fair, would not be just, to do so. And you are striving, by God's help, to live not only soberly, but also *righteously* in the present world.

III. We come now to the last word: "godly." The first word, as you see, refers to our duty to ourselves; the second to our duty to our neighbours; the third to our duty to God. And the three words, and the three things which the words signify, must go together. It is not enough to live soberly

and righteously, unless we also live godly. Self, our neighbours, God—we must do our duty to all three.

Now, what is our duty towards God? I cannot answer that question better than by quoting language with which you are all of you familiar: "My duty towards God is to believe in Him, to fear Him, and to love Him, with all my heart, with all my mind, with all my soul, and with all my strength; to worship Him, to give Him thanks, to put my whole trust in Him, to call upon Him, to honour His holy name and His word, and to serve Him truly all the days of my life." Notice the order here. Believing in God and loving God come first; and then our other duties come after. You see the reason of this. No service that we offer to God can be acceptable, unless we have given Him our hearts. We do not serve God in order that we may learn to love Him; but we serve Him because we already love Him. And it is just when we believe that He was so good and so kind as to part with His Son Jesus Christ for our sakes, to give Him up to die for us upon the Cross—it is then that we learn to love Him.

But I rather wish to speak to you now, not so much about the great Christian duty of loving God with all your heart, as about the practical duties of a Christian life. It is exceedingly important for us to form good habits when we are young, and there are certain good habits which I should like to persuade you to adopt now; and when you grow up I am sure you will be very thankful to me for having helped you to form them.

In the first place, you ought to get into the habit of reading your Bibles *regularly*. I mean reading them by yourselves. I would not, if I were you, read very much at a time, but I would read regularly: I would read right on: I would think over what I read, and try to make out its meaning. And I would never, were I you, forget to ask the Holy Spirit to enable me to understand what I read, and to apply it to myself. It is a good plan to take up one subject at a time. Such, for instance, as the life of our Lord. The four Evangelists—St Matthew, St Mark, St Luke, and St John—give each of them what we may call a different portrait of Christ; the same face seen from a different point of view. Examine each portrait separately, and then put the four together. And you can take up other subjects in the same way.

Then I would say, "Form a habit of prayer." I mean *private* prayer. There must be public worship and social worship—prayer in the congregation and prayer in the family; but all will be of no avail unless we know what it is to pray to our Father "Which is in secret." There is no spiritual life where there is no private prayer. See, then, to this habit. Be regular: be systematic. Allow nothing, if you can possibly help it, to interfere with the time you set apart for your private devotions.

Then I am sure it is a good thing to begin early, even whilst you are children, to give a certain proportion out of your own money to God. I do not dictate to you how much you ought to give: that will depend upon circumstances, and that you must decide for yourselves; but when you have decided, I should recommend you to abide by the decision, and not to depart from it. Of course I am speaking about *your own money*. There is no self-denial, no self-sacrifice, in asking your parents or friends to give you money to put into the plate at a collection. I want you to learn to part with something of your own; something which you might keep, if you liked—to part with it for God's sake and man's sake; and I want you to learn that lesson so that it shall become a habit and grow up with you, and last throughout the whole of your life.

Again: you come to church now with your parents; but when you are older, and can do as you like, be sure not to get into the habit of making

excuses for being absent from public worship. The public worship of Almighty God in the congregation is an important Christian duty, and it cannot be neglected without great peril to our souls. And the preaching of the Word is a very important means of God's appointment, for our growth in grace. I do not, of course, say that you can always come to the house of God. On some occasions you must be absent. Still, make a habit of coming. Make a point of being in your place, unless you are *compelled* to be absent.

Then there is the Holy Communion to be thought of by and by. Not now; but after you have been confirmed. About this, I say what I said about the other Christian duties: "Get into the habit of being systematic. When you have made up your mind to partake, partake *regularly*."

You have seen people, I dare say, who did everything by fits and starts. At one time they were very eager about drawing; then they gave up drawing, and took to music; then they became tired of music, and took to learning languages: and even when they were engaged in the pursuit of the moment, they were irregular and impulsive—would work one day and be idle and careless the next. Did they succeed in their studies? Of course not. How should such a plan be expected to succeed? And why should we expect to succeed in religion, if we allow ourselves to be irregular and unsystematic and impulsive in our religious duties?

So much then for Christian duties. Let me remind you again, that whilst we are performing these duties, and striving, by the help of God's Holy Spirit, to "live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world," we are to be at the same time on the outlook for the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. I think you children can understand this matter as well as we grown-up people can. You can remember as well as we can, that we are all of us servants in a great house; and that the Master, Who is now absent, may return at any time, and call upon us to show our work. If we love our absent Master, and are doing our best to please Him, the idea of His return will be pleasant to us. We shall like to think about it. There is no reason why *faithful* servants should dread His appearing. Quite the contrary. He comes to reward and to bless them, and to take them into His glory.

And so the question for each of us is, "Am I a *faithful* servant of the Lord Jesus Christ?"—*Rev. Gordon Calthrop.*

Money in the Fish's Mouth

"*Doth not your Master pay tribute?*"—*St Matt. xvii.* 24.

Our Saviour happened to be coming in at the gate of Capernaum, when one of those that received tribute-money came to Peter, and asked him if his Master did not pay tribute. Tribute was a tax gathered tribe by tribe; hence it was called "tribute" or "tribe money," paid as a tax. And what is a tax? A tax is a sum of money, paid by almost everybody, to pay for the army and navy, and such public expenses. Some taxes are very heavy, and hard to pay; especially for poor people.

And as tax-gatherers always tried to get something for themselves besides the tax itself, and were very hard upon the poor, they were hated and despised, and went by the name of "publicans." You often read in the Gospel of "publicans and sinners"; the worst of the people.

But this tribute-money at Capernaum was not collected by tax-gatherers or toll-keepers, like Matthew, who "sat there at the receipt of custom," or toll.

But this tribute-money—about fifteenpence of our money—was a poll-tax, or head-tax, paid by every man above twenty, for the service of the tabernacle in the wilderness, and afterwards of the Temple at Jerusalem. It was so

ordered by God to Moses and the people, as we find in Exod. xxx. 13, 14, 15, and xxxviii. 26.

It was not much money for one to pay; but when paid by almost every man, it ran up to a large sum.

A grain of corn is not much, children, is it? But if everybody in the parish brought one, it would fill a peck, and that made into flour and bread, might keep someone from starving. So also with rates and taxes; though they be more than a grain of corn from everyone.

So when the Saviour and the disciples were come into the house, He, knowing what Peter was asked, and what he answered, said to him: "What thinkest thou, Simon; of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?"

Peter answered: "Of strangers." "Then," said the Saviour, "the children are free."

What did He mean, think ye? For whom was this tribute-money gathered? For the Roman Emperor who then ruled over the country—or for God, to Whom the country belonged?

For God's House.

Right; that is, for His service; for Him. Therefore the Saviour, as Son of God, need not have paid it, because He, as Son, was free.

What did He do then? Did He not pay it?

Yes, He did. He told Peter to go to the sea, to cast a hook, and to open the mouth of the first fish he caught, and he would find some money in it; and then give it for himself and for the Saviour.

Very good. But what did the Saviour say? Read v. 27.

"Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them——"

Stop. "Notwithstanding"—that is—although I need not pay the money unless I like, yet I will do so, lest I should offend them; lest they should think it strange that I did not pay.

Now, what does this teach us, children?

Not only that our Saviour and the disciples were so poor, that He had to work a miracle in order to pay the tribute-money, but also—that He did not wish to hurt people's feelings needlessly, and to look strange.

But, as He went into the Synagogue with the rest, and in bad company, too, on Sabbath Days, because it was the custom thus to go to the parish church —so also in this case, He followed the custom, though He needn't have done so, unless He chose.

He thought if He didn't pay, they wouldn't be able to make it out, but would think it strange, and be hurt. So rather than do that, He wrought a miracle, and paid the money for Himself and for Peter; because, perhaps, Peter alone of the disciples, was old enough for the tax; or because he was the one to whom the tax-gatherers had spoken about it.

Here then, children, is a lesson for us. "If it be possible as much as lieth in us, to live peaceably with all men" (Rom. xii. 18). Rather to give way, when it is not against our conscience, than stand out, and, perhaps, hurt other people's feelings.

Little Tommy there, likes to sit next to his bigger brother, though it is not his place in the school, and Jem Drakes, next to him, is quite right not to mind it, but to let him sit there. Everybody knows it is Jemmy's place, but that he gives it up to the little fellow, rather than hurt his feelings.

So also, children, people older than you often grumble at having to pay rates and taxes, which are sometimes very heavy, but the Saviour sets us an example of what His Apostle tells us to do.

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers." "For this cause pay

ye tribute also. Render, therefore, to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour." And our Saviour further teaches us, children, in all things that are good or harmless, to follow the customs of the place we live in. People who like to be strange and unlike the rest, often are so from pride or conceit; and make themselves very foolish in the eyes of sensible people.

Remember the words of the Saviour, Who was free from paying tribute: "Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them—take that money, and give unto them for Me and thee."—*Rev. C. S. Malan, D.D.*

Critical Notes on the Epistle

Let every Soul be Subject.—The precept is without exception. Every soul of man, however high or low in place, must submit to the authorities which are over him. Even the highest in place must submit to the law which is over all. There is no Divine warrant for rebellion. Active obedience is due to all lawful commands; but if human authorities should command anything unlawful (and we must obey God rather than man, Acts iv. 19; v. 29), still the duty of a Christian is to submit to the penalty, though he refuses the obedience.

For there is no Power.—All legitimate authority is derived from God. All existing, established authorities are to be regarded as having (not necessarily in their origin but in their force and power upon the conscience) the sanction of God. The "image and superscription" may be of men, but obedience is due to them for the sake of God. To resist them, therefore, is to resist God and to commit heavy sin.

For Rulers are not a Terror.—St Paul speaks of rulers in general. Peace and order and obedience are what they may be considered always to approve. Order and civil power, being the great defence against lawless force and violence, are to be regarded as being an ordinance of God, armed with His sanction and authority. Resentment, therefore, even to the extent of death, is inflicted under the Divine delegation. Thus submission to authority is not only a matter of fear and cautious living, but of duty and conscience likewise.

For this Cause.—Tributes, therefore, and taxes are, for the same reason, to be regarded as due to God; for they are paid to those who are God's ministers discharging duties which God has put into their hands.

Render therefore.—And, along with tributes and taxes, all the customary dues of civil society, respect, honour, and subordination, according to men's degrees and positions, are to be rendered on the same principle.

Anecdotes and Illustrations

The Sphere of the Civil Government Limited.—Palissy the Potter when imprisoned for his Protestantism was visited by his king. The king said to him, "My good man, you have been forty and five years in the service of the queen, my mother, and in mine, and we have suffered you to retain your own religious convictions amidst all the executions and massacres that have taken place. Now, however, I am so pressed by the Guise party and my people that I have been compelled, in spite of myself, to imprison you. You will be burnt to-morrow if you refuse to be converted." "Sir," replied Palissy, "you have several times said you feel pity for me. I thank you for your words, but it is I who pity you at this moment. You have said, 'I am compelled.' That is not to speak as a king. My fellow-sufferers and

myself, who have part in the Kingdom of Heaven, will teach you how to speak royally. No one can compel a potter to bow down to images of clay."

"UNTO CÆSAR THE THINGS THAT ARE CÆSAR'S AND TO GOD THE THINGS THAT ARE GOD'S."—The Government stamp implies the Government right to tax. Moreover there is a recognition of the fact that the worst order is better than anarchy, and any rule sufficiently good to be endured by the majority is better than nothing and is worth its cost. We must not be over scrupulous in charging ourselves with responsibilities not belonging to us. The tax we pay in England may sometimes be used in an unjust war or in supporting an unwise policy. We are not, therefore, at liberty to withhold it. But while we give to Cæsar that which bears his image and superscription, we have to give to God that which bears His image and superscription—viz. the soul that He has redeemed.

CONSCIENCE.—We all know that this word comes from *con* and *scio*; but what does that '*con*' intend? "Conscience" is not merely that which I know, but that which I know *with some other*; for this prefix cannot, as I think, be esteemed superfluous, or taken to imply merely that which I know *with* or *to* myself. That other knower whom the word implies is God; His law making itself known and felt in the heart; and the work of conscience is the bringing of the evil of our acts and thoughts as a lesser, to be tried and measured by this as a greater—the word growing out of and declaring that awful duplicity of our moral being which arises from the presence of God in the soul—our thoughts, by the standard which that presence implies, and as the result of a comparison with it, "accusing or excusing one another."

GOD FIRST.—When the people of Switzerland were subject to the Austrians, a proud governor placed his cap on a pole and commanded the captive race to bow before it. William Tell refused to obey, saying calmly that his knee should bend to God and God alone. "My life," he said, "is in the Austrian's hand, my conscience is my own." When we are required to give to Cæsar what belongs to God, we are bound to refuse.

THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON.—It was a habit of the Duke of Wellington to remain to take the sacrament in the church with the other communicants, however humble their lot in life, and however meanly they were dressed. On one occasion a poor, decrepid old man, who had been sitting on the opposite side to the duke, happened to arrive at the communion-table at the same moment at which Wellington came up. A pew-opener who was present seemed to be shocked at the thought of a poor old villager taking the Sacrament at the same time as the great duke, and so he hurriedly advanced to tell him to draw back. He touched the old man on the shoulder, and whispered in his ear, "Do you not see the duke? Draw back directly until he has received the bread and wine!" The villager, in great alarm, would have instantly retreated, but the Duke of Wellington, who had witnessed the confusion into which he had been thrown, immediately came to the rescue. Clasping the old man's hand to prevent his rising from his kneeling position, he gently said, "Do not move; we are all equal here."

THE CALL OF DUTY.—Medical men, like soldiers, are often called upon to meet death in the regular performance of duty: they carry their lives in their hands, and fall in the midst of their labour. Dr Austie was "killed in action." The children in a charitable institution in one of the London suburbs were being stricken down with violent attacks of an obscure disease, by which several of them were carried off in a few hours. Dr Austie was called in to advise not only as to the treatment of the survivors, but also as to the cause of the epidemic. He at once suspected some serious sanitary mischief in the school, and believed it to be a supply of bad water. With heroic thoroughness he set

to work. He did not leave to others the odious task of examining minutely into the defective sewerage; but himself, for six hours on Sunday, Sept. 6th, 1874, engaged in the search, tracking the disease to its foul lurking-places; as good Christian work as ever religious teacher did on the Lord's Day, and so he regarded it. Then he proceeded to make a post-mortem examination of a child who had died of the disease, and in doing so a needle accidentally ran into the third finger of his right hand. It was but a small puncture, but it was his death-blow. The poison spread through his system, and within a week that life—too costly to have been sacrificed prematurely, and in such a way—was laid upon the altar of science. "I loved him dearly," wrote the Rev. Harry Jones, of St George's-in-the-East; "he was one of the truest and best friends of men I ever knew. Brave as a hero, and true as he was brave. Down in the front rank with sword in hand and harness on his back, fighting on the side of the God of health and life. War can ill spare such Christian soldiers. I can't tell you how I shall miss him; he always stirred my heart, and helped me in trying to do right." His inscription on a marble tablet may be found in King's College Chapel.

Questions on the Epistle

1. What does this passage contain? 2. Whose instructions are they? 3. To whom were they addressed? 4. Have they more than a local application? 5. By whom are the civil authorities ordained? 6. Therefore resistance to authority means that we resist what? 7. To whom are rulers a source of fear? 8. Why? 9. Why must we be subject? 10. Is resistance to authority ever justifiable?

Books of Reference

Godet's "Epistles of St Paul"; *Findlay's* "Epistles of Apostle Paul"; "Cambridge Bible"; "Century Bible"; "Expositor's Bible"; "Biblical Illustrator"; *Dale's* "Laws of Christ for Common Life."

General Subjects

On Growing Up

"*When I was a child, I spake as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man I put away childish things.*"—1 *Cor. xiii.* 11.

To all of us when we are children it is a delightful thought that we shall some day be grown up. The very words "growing up" are delightful. The day comes when a little girl first wears a long dress; and when a boy leaves his knickerbockers behind, and proudly walks about in trousers—or, later still, when he wears a man's coat instead of his jacket. What a proud day that is, and how entirely grown up we feel, and how delighted we are with the envy of our companions who are a little younger, and have not yet reached long dresses or men's coats. This is the time we have always looked forward to; we used always to think "When I am grown up I can do as I like: I shall not have to obey orders—I shall be free!" And now we *are* grown up, and that time has come! If anyone now were to call us children, or to say that anything we did was childish, we should be very much offended.

We know that all animals grow up: from the moment they become alive

at all they grow, and they go on growing until they are grown up. Lions and tigers are first little cubs, very playful and innocent, but every day they grow stronger, bigger, hungrier, and fiercer, until they have grown into fine full-grown lions and tigers.

If a boy were to grow up only in the same way as the wild animals, should we be satisfied? He *is* an animal: his limbs would grow, and his strength would grow, and his appetite would grow: and by the time he was eighteen or twenty he might be a very fine, broad, strong fellow to look at, but that would not be all that we should wish for in a man. When boys long to be grown up, it is not only bigger and stronger bodies that they want, though it is very delightful to be big and strong and powerful, but they want another sort of power. They want to be "free": they want to be "their own masters": they want to "do as they like."

Let us go into a school and take a look round, and see how it is managed. There is an infant school, and in that there is first a class of "babies" who are too tiny to do much, but they learn to sit still, to fold or clap their hands, to sing, to march, to stand or sit when they are told, and to do all these things together and immediately. Even "babies" learn to be obedient, and they delight to do what they are told. "When I was a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child." But the babies grow older; and as we go round the schoolroom we find little boys and girls learning to do their small sums, to spell out letters and words—to knit—to sew: and as each child grows older he grows wiser, and can use his hands, his feet, his eyes, his mind better; they are all easier for him to control: he becomes more and more "master of himself," as we say. Then when we go into the girls' and boys' schools we find the children mounting up class after class. Each is put into the class most suitable for him; all his powers are trained at once, and he grows—not like the lions and tigers only—so as to have a bigger and stronger body and a bigger appetite—but in his mind and body together; and his mind learns to control his body. When he was a tiny child perhaps he would cry very loud because his mother would not give him another piece of cake; but the older boy, when still quite a little fellow, would be ashamed to cry loudly for a piece of cake: he would think it very babyish. He is learning to "put away childish things," and his mind is stronger than his body, by being a greater and a better thing, and so it keeps his body and his hunger and appetites under control.

There is a story of a young man named Kenneth, who went with Napoleon's army to Russia, and there was a terrible time when the French had been defeated by the Russians, and had to retreat across the frozen and snowy country. The people were scattered about, and had to do as best they could and find food if they could. With Kenneth were his sister, and a friend of his; one night they had to rest in a graveyard, and there was only one piece of bread left, and they were nearly starving; the friend, Louis, brought out the piece of bread, and Effie, Kenneth's sister, was going to divide it amongst them: but Louis only smiled faintly and told Effie he did not want any—that she might eat it. It was very little altogether; and Effie did eat it, and Louis lay down on a grave and went to sleep. Do you think he was not hungry? Yes, he was starving: and next morning when they went to wake him to go on their journey they found that he was dead. He had done it for Effie's sake, and she had no idea how nearly starving he was or what he suffered; and he did not wish her to know: but he could not help her knowing that he died of it. Now you see what I mean by a boy's mind being master over his body. Louis had "put away childish things," and he might if you like be called "his own master."

Well, when boys and girls leave school and go to work, they have to learn their work; they grow in knowledge and in power to work. In factories the young boys and girls have special work to do, different from the grown-up men and women; and as they grow stronger, and as their knowledge increases, they are put to do harder or more skilled work.

And as boys and girls grow up there is another difference between them and young animals; they are expected to grow more reasonable: and if their parents are not pleased with them, and tell them where they have been in the wrong, they can understand better than when they were little children; and often they can see for themselves quite clearly that one thing is right and another wrong: their conscience should grow also. One day a boy will follow a companion in doing wrong; but after he fully understands that it is wrong he will say, "No, I can't do that; and I am sure you ought not to do it either: do give it up." He puts away childish things, and no longer follows a companion without thinking.

And then another thing happens; as he grows older, and as he shows more and more that he puts away childish things—as he shows that he can be strong against temptation, and knows right from wrong—he has more and more chances given him—more opportunities—he has more entrusted to him. A poor little boy has threepence given him by a neighbour to go to a shop for her and buy her some strawberries. As he comes back a boy begs for *one* strawberry, but the little errand boy says "No, they are not mine to give." The other boy tries to get one—and the strawberries are put down and a fight comes on, in which some other boys come and join; but the errand boy punches his enemy well, and then in the scuffle with the other boys he picks up his parcel and runs off. He tells the woman what has happened, and says proudly, "he didn't get *one*, missus, I *am* glad." That boy is trusted more after that, because he was faithful. Just so God trusts us more and gives us more important things to do as we are found fit for them; like the men in the story of the talents; each man who had been faithful with what was entrusted to him was raised to a more important duty. But if our faithfulness did not grow stronger and greater as we grew up, we should not be putting away childish things; we should still be "thinking as a child." When you have learnt one lesson you have another set you, and each one is a little harder or a little more advanced: and you move up gradually in your school through all the classes and standards; and in just the same way when we have learnt one of the lessons God has set us, He gives us another to learn; or when we have been faithful in one trust, He gives us another; and in this way we have the opportunity given us of growing stronger and better in character as we grow older and bigger in body.

I dare say you have sometimes seen a number of girls and boys very nicely dressed—and the girls in white dresses and white veils—going into a church on a weekday; and you may have asked what they were going for, and have been told that they were going to be "confirmed." They go to the church to share in the service which is held there by a bishop; and it is for girls and boys who have grown old enough to understand something of what their duty is, without being always told it, by parents or friends; they are considered old enough to take their duty into their own hands—and they go to this service because they wish openly to take upon themselves their own duties and to ask God to help them to be faithful. Do they go because now (being nearly grown up) they may *do as they like*, and be quite free of all rules and orders? They are to be *free*, yes; but free in a very solemn sense; free to choose for themselves whether they will do right or wrong; whether they will be faithful or faithless, brave or cowardly, unselfish or selfish. Some people

never go to be confirmed at all; but this is not because the same time of growing up and taking their duty into their own hands does not come to them: it comes to all; and there is only *one* condition under which any of us can ever be right in doing *as we like*; and that is if we *like* to do what is *right*.

And so growing up is not in itself a grand thing; it all depends on *how* we grow up. If a boy grows up and becomes more and more wicked as he grows stronger and bigger—then growing up is a terrible thing. Whether it is a fine thing to be grown up—to be big—to be strong—all depends on what we *do* with our strength. If a man uses his strength to be cruel and tyrannical to those who are weaker, he is often called a "brute," because he has only grown big and strong like an animal, and his tenderness and gentleness have not grown strong too, together with his body. In this many a "brute" may give us a lesson; for big dogs are kind and gentle to little ones or to children; horses and elephants give their great strength to be useful to men, and go mildly and gently about work that is not for themselves. Very often when big girls or boys who think themselves "grown up" are asked to do some little thing they will refuse, and when asked *why* they refuse they will say, "*I don't want*," as if that was a good reason. Did ever any *child* say anything more childish? They have not put away childish things; their growing up which they are so proud of has made them selfish.

"No"

The most difficult of all words to say; and yet it is almost the first utterance of the baby, and very often the last breath of querulous old age is expended in its utterance. The difficulty concerning the saying of "No" does not lie in the mere pronunciation of the monosyllable, but in saying it at the right time.

Of all the means of ruin which dog the steps of life, not one is more prolific of evil than the inability to say "No" at the right time. In the vast majority of undone lives, the source of all the ruin may be traced to a moment when the tongue hesitated to say "No"; and of all the accomplishments of the tongue, none is more valuable than the ability to say "No" at the right time. But to hit the nick of time requires experience and judgment; and then to pronounce the word, determination.

What a curious word is this "No!" Its utterance is the mark of the great and of the little. Thus it becomes an important question to know when it is right to utter the great monosyllable. The most valuable part of an action is the motive; if the motive be pure and unselfish, the action redounds to the praise of the actor. It has pleased God to relate an action to a motive in the same close relationship as the flower to the seed. Then the first test which should be applied to discover whether it be right to say "No" is—examine the *motive* which prompts the negative reply. If you discover any selfishness mingled with the motive, you may at once suspect that you are going to say "No" unadvisedly. This side of the subject receives ample illustration in the giving of charity.

It is hardly needful to write, that to a suggestion to break one of God's plain commands a decided and unhesitating "No" ought at once to be said. Yes, it ought to be said; but, alas! how often does the moral purpose fail, and the wavering heart parleys with the temptation, and sins! How many a sin would be resisted successfully if its first suggestion were met with an emphatic "No"—a "No" said aloud. Sound seems to give it personality; and your "No" appears as a strengthening angel, to aid you to do battle.

As a practical suggestion, I would say: Whenever it is necessary to refuse a

request, let the refusual be kindly made. A kind and sympathising word will do much to heal the sore which a direct "No" is sure to make. A rough and surly "No"—a heartless "No," a curt "No," a careless "No"—either wounds deeply, or else arouses anger. Gentleness is one of the fruits of God's Holy Spirit, and one of the signs of that upward living which at length shall reach the Hill of God.

The gentleman is a courteous man, who, if experience and judgment should require him to refuse a request, will make the refusal so pleasantly, that the rejected applicant will be well-nigh as gratified as if his petition had been met with "Yes," instead of "No."—*Rev. H. Martyn Hart.*

Path-making

"*Looking unto Jesus.*"—*Heb. xii. 2.*

There are some very curious paths in Africa, and the strangest thing about them is their crookedness. They are never straight for fifty yards together, and the reason that is given for the way in which they twist and turn is this: When a man sets out to walk from one village to another he knows just about where the village lies, and he sets out in that direction; but if he comes across any obstacle in his way, he just goes round it. Suppose it is a fallen tree. Well, he walks round it, and others following him take the same course, and so they form a path which is like a very wavy line. By and by the tree that made the path turn aside rots away, or the white ants eat it; but by that time the path has been made, and so it always has the "kink" in it which tells where the tree once lay.

If you could see the soul paths which many people tread, you would find them just like this: They are full of crooked places which tell how, because there was an obstacle in the way, the life left a straight line. But this is poor path-making. There is a text which tells us to make straight paths for our feet, and the way to do that is to do what is right, refusing to turn aside for anybody or anything. For instance, it is always right to tell the truth, but sometimes it is inconvenient. You may see how you can get out of a difficulty by telling a lie, and you will be tempted to take that crooked way, but there can never be any doubt about what you ought to do. The right thing is to make a straight path for your feet, and to tell the truth whatever the consequences may be. I am going to give you the very best rule that I know of for making straight paths, but first I will tell you a story.

Two boys went running out to play one winter morning—

> "When the snow lay round about,
> Cold and crisp and even."

When they were tired of snowballing, they looked about for a new amusement. "I know," said one, "let us see which can walk straightest across that field."

There it lay, a beautiful smooth sheet of purest white, and they knew that when they had gone across it there would be two lines of footprints stretching from one side to the other. So they set out, and Boy Number One looked very carefully at his feet and was particular to put one foot exactly in line with the other; and he thought he had done very well, until at last he got to the other side and looked back, when, to his astonishment, he saw that his footprints had been zigzagging all over the place. The second boy had made a beautifully straight line. "How did you manage it?" asked Boy Number One, "I was very careful to look at my feet." "But I didn't," said Boy

Number Two. "See this tree? Well, I saw that it was right opposite me when I was on the other side of the field, and I made straight for it."

Yes, that is the secret of straight walking, and now I can give you my rule in a single sentence: "Make straight paths for your feet . . . looking unto Jesus." Look to Jesus for salvation from sin. Look to Jesus for strength to do right. Look to Jesus as your Pattern. Look to Jesus for guidance day by day. And then the path that you take will bring you straight to His feet in Heaven.—*Rev. F. J. Exley.*

On Making Excuses

"*And they all with one consent began to make excuses.*"—*St Luke xiv.* 18.

Excuses are very old, almost as old as sin, for man no sooner sinned than he began to excuse himself. Sin and excuses have ever since gone hand in hand. There is a great deal of Adam in little boys, and a good deal of Eve in little girls.

I. Look at Adam's Excuse.—How very ungallant it was of him to speak of Eve in this way! Yet I have known little boys quite as ungallant, when they have tried to put all their own blame on their little sisters. How Adam must have despised himself after this miserable pretence; and how little boys must often have looked with contempt upon themselves for having meanly tried to make scapegoats of those weaker than themselves! It were far better had they never made an excuse, for a false excuse more than doubles the sin, and is far more aggravating than the first wrong.

II. Eve's Excuse is not a whit better.—It is true that she was not mean enough to turn the blame back on her husband. She felt she was to be blamed more than Adam. But she put all the fault upon the serpent. How humiliating was her pretext! There she stood, made after the likeness of God, and yet she confessed that she had listened to the serpent rather than obeyed her God! I have heard little girls, too, give very humiliating excuses, such as: "I have a quick temper"; "I can't help it, and there's an end of it." *No, that is not an end of it.* Notice that the excuses of both Adam and Eve were largely untrue. You would think that they had no will of their own; and yet, if Eve had questioned Adam's right to make his own choice, and the serpent had suggested that Eve had no self-control, both would have indignantly resented the insult. We read in Luke xiv. 18: "They all with one consent began to make excuse." "*Began!*" There is here a quiet suggestion that they were a long time before they finished.

Now, bad as excuses are, they show that people are ashamed of doing wrong, and there is hope of every one who blushes at the thought of wrong-doing. The tempter was not ashamed, hence there was no hope concerning him. But if we are ashamed, how much better it is to confess our faults. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Each of you can pray, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner"; and if you thus pray earnestly, the Lord *will* forgive, will be your Lord and your Guide even unto death, and your everlasting portion.—*Rev. D. Davies.*

The Pearl of Days

"*Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.*"—*Ex. xx.* 8.

It would be difficult to say which is God's best gift to men, next to the gift of His Son, and the gift of His Spirit, and the gift of His Word. I dare say if you were to try to make out a list of the gifts of God, arranging them according to their value, it would be very difficult to know in what order to put

them down, there are so many of them which are so very good; and as for making a full and correct list of them, I suspect we should never get to the end of it. I wish now to speak to you about one of these gifts of God. It is well to be often thinking and often speaking to each other about what God gives us, that we may love Him more, and be ever seeking to make a better use of His gifts.

I am not at all sure that many of you would name, among the foremost of our good things, the one which I am now to speak about. And yet, if we could get the opinion of all the good on earth, and of all the saints in Heaven, we should have millions upon millions of voices sounding forth its praises, and thanking God for it, as one of His greatest blessings to the sons of men.

Not many years ago, this formed the subject of a number of Prize Essays, written by working men, who all sought to recommend the Sabbath to others, by telling what they themselves had seen and felt of its value. One of the essays sent in was found to have been written by a young working woman, and was afterwards published and dedicated to Queen Victoria, with this beautiful title—"The Pearl of Days." I now take that as the title of this address, and shall try to show you that the name is well applied to the Sabbath. I have no doubt there are some days which stand out to you above all others, such as a birthday, or a Christmas or New Year's Day—some holiday which you always greatly enjoy, and would like to come round oftener than it does. Perhaps you would call one of these "The Pearl of Days," as prizing it above all others. And yet the Sabbath is the real "Pearl of Days." It should be so to you, as it is in the sight of God.

I have spoken of the Sabbath as the "Pearl of Days." It was spoken of as the "*Prince and Sovereign of Days*" by a good man, long ago. It might be called the "*King of Days.*" I wish I could make it as beautiful and attractive to you as I would. I wish I could get you to love it, so that, instead of it being a dull, tiresome, wearisome day, and as coming after Saturday, just like passing out of bright sunshine into a dark night—or out of a palace into a prison, it should be wearied for, all the week round, and received with songs of welcome when it comes. God meant it to be a happy day—the happiest day of all the seven. He gave it to us as one of the best blessings He could bestow. When His people are recounting His various gifts to them, you find this getting a special place—"Thou madest known to them Thy holy Sabbaths." So He Himself says, "I gave them My Sabbath," as if He had given them something that did not belong to earth—something of Heaven—as was indeed the case. Many—both old and young—have found it to be such, and have said so. We are told of one little boy, who loved his play and prized his Saturday as much as any of you, saying, "Count up my Sundays: tell me how many I have had in my life." And when he was told he had had about three hundred, he exclaimed, "Oh, how many! How kind of God to give us so many; and in Heaven it will be all Sunday together!" Does that thought ever fill *your* heart with joy?

The Sabbath comes to us as a Heavenly visitant—as a messenger of love. It bears its message in its very name—*rest*. It comes to the weary and worn out, and whispering in their ear, it speaks of *rest*—rest here, and with its finger pointing upward—rest in Heaven. The name itself is a beautiful one, and while some people think it old-fashioned and do not like it, that must be because they do not enter into the meaning of it. We speak of the *Christian Sabbath*, which is just the *Christian Rest*.

The subject is so large that we can only look at a small part of it now—some of the *reasons* for observing the Sabbath, and the *manner* of observing it.

I. Reasons for Observing the Sabbath.—1. We have God's *command*.

This of itself should be enough for us. I sometimes hear boys, when told by a father or mother to do such and such a thing, asking, "*Why* am I to do it?" Now the less that word is on a boy's lips the better. If he is dutiful and right-hearted, it will be enough for him that he has a parent's orders. I can suppose one of you saying, regarding something, "I remember, when my father was in life, that he often told me to do this. I do not quite understand *why*, but I do not need to understand. It is enough for me to know that it is a right thing, and that he bade me. I have such love and respect for him, that I need no more than to have his command or wish; and though he has long been in his grave, I shall do it."

And so it may well be, in regard to anything your Heavenly Father bids or forbids you to do. He has always good reasons for what He commands, and so, whether you fully understand it or not—whether you like it or not, you are always safe to do His bidding.

Now if there is one thing more than another which He is particular in commanding—it is the observance of the Sabbath. You hear His majestic voice again and again repeating, "Ye shall keep My Sabbaths." On these tables of stone, written with God's own finger, and binding upon all men to the world's end, you read the inscription, "Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy." And if anyone should ask you why you observe the Sabbath, it should be enough to answer, "God commmands it."

The whole of the Ten Commandments must stand or fall together. They are all equally binding, for all the world and for all time. None of them has ever been done away with. So long as it is God's command to have no other god before Him—not to worship Him by images—not to take His name in vain—not to dishonour parents—not to kill, or be impure, or steal, or lie, or covet—so long is it God's command, "to remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy." God thus surrounds the "Pearl of Days" with the guard of His Law.

2. We have *God's example*. He acts towards His children as other wise and kind parents do. He does Himself what He bids us do. When He says to us, "Be merciful," it is added, "even as your Father Who is in Heaven is merciful." In like manner, when the Lord Jesus says, "Forgive," He also says, "even as I also have forgiven you." You remember how He taught His disciples the lesson of humility and kindness. He not only said, "Be humble and kind to each other. Do not think it beneath you to do anything for each other's good. Do not be always quarrelling as to which of you is to be the greatest." Nay, but He took a towel and girded Himself, and poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel, saying, "I have given you *an example*, that ye should do as I have done to you." He knew there was no way of teaching like that.

And when God would teach us this other lesson, He did not merely say, "Keep My Sabbath," but when He had finished the great work of creation, though He needed not rest for Himself, He said, as a reason for our resting: "For in six day the Lord created Heaven and earth, etc., *and rested the seventh day*." Such importance did He attach to the due observance of His day. Instead, therefore, of asking, "What does such a one say? What does he do?" our question should be, "What does *God* say? What did *He* do?" Sometimes He sets before us the example of good men, and bids us imitate *them*; but that will not suffice here. He sets *Himself* before us as our Example, and bids us imitate Himself. He thus surrounds the "Pearl of Days" with the guard of His example.

3. *God claims it as His own day*. I said the Sabbath was God's gift to

men, and yet He gave it with a view to certain great purposes being served by it, and He still retains the right to say how men are to use it. Hence He calls it "the Sabbath of the Lord thy God"; "My Sabbath"; "My holy day"; "the Lord's Day." And when it is used for other purposes than those for which it was given, it is an abuse of His gift—it is robbing Him of His right. You would be indignant if anyone were to say you were a thief. And yet the Sabbath-breaker is a thief, in the sense that he turns God's day to a use different from that for which it was given.

All the other days of the week He has given to men, to attend more especially to the things in this life. He says, "Six days shalt thou labour and *do all thy work*." And yet with all the other six days of the week for such purposes, some people will encroach upon the seventh, and make it just like the rest.

This, then, is clear, that the Sabbath is not ours—does not belong to us, to do what we like with it. It is given for a certain purpose and on certain conditions. And God is very jealous as to this purpose being served, and these conditions being complied with. We must ask Him what He would have us to make of His gift—how He would have us to spend His day. And He will not leave us in doubt as to this. Here is His own direction—"Not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words, on My holy day." Is there not ample reason for not misspending the Sabbath? You have no right to it, except for the uses for which God gave it.

Perhaps someone says, "things are changed now from what they were in Old Testament times." Yes, but only in the way of connecting the Sabbath more with the Lord Jesus, so that it now bears His name and should be spent in His service. It is called "the Lord's Day"—that is, Christ's Day.

4. *God is pleased and honoured by the keeping of it.* God is very jealous of His honour, and when He has given His command and example, and set forth His claim, His honour must needs be concerned in the matter. And so it is expressly said, "If thou call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and *shalt honour Him*." How He complains of Israel for having "polluted His Sabbath," one of the things for which He sent them into captivity. On the other hand, how He commended those who kept His day: "Thus said the Lord, Unto those that keep My Sabbath, and choose the things that please Me, I will give a name and a place within My house better than of sons and of daughters."

What you will do to please and honour a father or mother! And you can hardly do too much in that way. You tell us what they have done for you, and how deserving they are of all the love and honour you can show them. And will you not seek to please and honour God in His own way?

5. *It is a memorial of a completed creation work and of Christ's resurrection.* Up to the time of Christ, the Sabbath was the great memorial of God's finishing the work of creation.

Was not such an event worthy of being kept in mind? What a wonderful and beautiful world we live in! Its mountain scenery, its lakes and rivers, its glens with ferns and other wild plants, its meadows strewn over with flowers, to which the richest carpet is not to be compared, the fruits and flowers of the garden in such endless variety—the whole vegetable world from the gigantic trees of the forest down to the tiny moss or lichen—the mineral world, with such untold treasures buried in the heart of the earth—the animal world, from the monsters of the deep and of the land, down to the almost invisible creatures that crowd in a drop of water, and man, the most wonderful of all—the heavenly bodies—sun and moon and stars—worlds

upon worlds outside of our own—our Father made them all—they are all His handiwork.

When any great enterprise is finished now—a railway, or a canal, or a bridge, or a public building, or waterworks for a crowded city—how the event is celebrated and the commemorative tablet is erected, and other reminders of it abound! I suppose the finishing of the Forth Bridge, as a marvel of engineering skill, will be thus kept in remembrance. The almanac of future years will record "The Forth Bridge finished"—on such a day.

And shall a finished Creation have nothing specially to remind men of it? The Sabbath does so every week, and will continue to do so till the end of time. It says, "God made the worlds—remember Him as the great and wise and good Creator of all things.

Now it is—in addition to that—the great memorial of the completion of the work of redemption by Christ. It was this that made the Sabbath such a joyful day to the early Christians, telling that Christ's redemption work was finished, so that when they met each other, their joyous salutation was, "He is risen, He is risen!"

Well may such a day be remembered and observed. We see with what earnestness and enthusiasm other memorial days are observed. I might refer to many instances. A few will suffice. On the 18th June, 1815, the great battle of Waterloo was fought, which decided the destinies of Europe. Success crowned the British arms under the Duke of Wellington, and peace was secured between Britain and France, which has never since been broken. How that 18th of June was kept in remembrance! how its return year after year was celebrated, till the number of surviving heroes at the Waterloo Banquet had become so small, that it had to be given up!

On the 1st August, 1834, liberty to the slave was proclaimed throughout the whole British dominions. On the last night of July in that memorable year, a great assembly of slaves met in a church in one of our West Indian islands. At five minutes to twelve, Mr Clarkson, who had done so much to bring about their emancipation, rose and exclaimed, "The monster is dying!" The next five minutes were spent in silence and in prayer. When the clock struck twelve, the same voice exclaimed, "The monster is dead!" The joy of the people was unbounded, for from that hour no man or woman could be a slave on British soil, or on board a British ship; and since then, the first day of August in each year has been observed as a holiday—has been regarded as the brightest day in all the year. Each time it comes round, it is welcomed with a joy peculiarly its own. It commemorates the achievement of freedom.

On the 4th of July, 1776, the United States of America asserted their independence and threw off the yoke of the mother-country. Since then, "Independence Day," as it is called, has been observed all over the American continent, and by American citizens all over the world. I spent the 4th of July 1874 in the city of Boston. It was a day of universal rejoicing. The people assembled in thousands in the public park. All the places of business were closed. Flags were flying from trees and windows. Little banners, with the stars and stripes, were fastened to the horses' heads, and were carried by boys in their jacket buttonholes. That is the great day in the American year.

In an ironmonger's shop, in a country town in Scotland, the shopkeeper sat at his desk at the window. A young apprentice in the cellar below, had stuck the candle which he carried, in a barrel of gunpowder; the gunpowder exploded, the shop window was blown out, and the good man who sat in it was carried in the current of air to the top of the street, and there landed

safely on his feet, while the apprentice was blown to pieces. It was such a wonderful deliverance, that the ironmonger observed the day as a day of prayer and thanksgiving, to the end of his life. Is it difficult to understand how he should have done so?

And shall we not gladly commemorate our deliverance—our victory—our emancipation—the announcement that the sinner's salvation was complete, by the rising of Jesus from the dead? Shall we not remember this day on which our Redeemer arose? Shall we ever suffer ourselves to be deprived of a day that has such happy and hallowed associations? Surely the Sabbath should be a happy day—a day of gladness and rejoicing—as the memorial of the Resurrection of Jesus and of the completion of our redemption.

6. *It is a blessed emblem and foretaste of Heaven.* It points back to the Paradise that was lost. It points forward to Paradise restored. It is the very name given to Heaven. "There remaineth *a rest—a Sabbatism—the keeping of a Sabbath*, unto the people of God." We think and speak of Heaven as the perfection of all that is good and bright and blessed. We delight to think of our dear ones who have died in the Lord, as having gone before us to the Better Land. We look forward to Heaven as the glorious home of all Christ's redeemed ones. And every time the Sabbath comes round, it tells of all this. It says, "All this is surely coming. The rest which I give is but the shadow, but it tells of the substance. I am one of the finger-posts that point forward to the Home that is before you—to the meeting again of departed friends in Christ—to their being for ever with each other and with the Lord." When holiday-time comes, and you are on your way to the home for which you have so wearied, does not every new milestone get a kindly welcome, as if it had something of home about it?—does not every finger-post, with its pointing hand and the dear name upon it, gladden your heart? And will you not welcome and prize each returning Sabbath, as it serves the same purpose regarding the Home above?

7. *The keeping of it has God's blessing attached to it.* "The Lord blessed the Sabbath Day." He set it apart above all the other days of the week as specially honourable, and He linked special blessing to it. God has honoured the Sabbath above all the other days of the week, and blessed temporally and spiritually those who have observed it. I have already quoted a passage from Isaiah, in which God gave this promise to those who kept His Sabbath, though despised among men—"And the sons of the stranger who shall keep My Sabbath, even them will I bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer." So in chapter lviii. 14: "Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

What honour was put on the Sabbath in New Testament times! It was on the Sabbath that Jesus first appeared to the disciples after His Resurrection. It was on the Sabbath that He joined the disciples on the road to Emmaus. It was on the Sabbath that He repeated His visit. It was on the Sabbath that the Holy Ghost was poured out—on the Day of Pentecost, converting thousands. It was on the Sabbath that Jesus revealed Himself to John on the Isle of Patmos.

And then what honour has since then been done to the Sabbath, and what a blessing has come to men in connection with it! What a birthday of souls it has been! How many have to count their age, as believers, from the Sabbath! Looking back from glory, the Sabbath will appear the brightest and best of all the days on earth. How many have to tell, from their own experience, what the Fourth Commandment says, "The Lord blessed the

Sabbath Day." There is no surer way of missing the blessing, than by neglecting the Sabbath. There is no surer way of getting the blessing, than by rightly observing it.

Many a situation has been lost, because the occupier of it would not violate his conscience, and, as he believed, break the law of God, by working on the Lord's Day. Sometimes men have lost their business, because they would not serve their customers and keep the " Sabbath shop " open, and it seemed as if nothing but ruin lay before them. And yet, in many wonderful ways, God has interposed on behalf of such.

Some years ago, a youth in a public office was required by his superior to do Sabbath work which his conscience would not allow him to do, and he respectfully declined. He was immediately reported to headquarters as having disobeyed orders. Some time after, a vacancy occurred in a higher department of the same work. Inquiry was made about the young man, as one who must be a young man of principle, whose services would be worth securing, and he got the appointment, without any seeking of his own, over the head of the very man who had reported him, illustrating the words, " Them that honour Me, I will honour."

A friend told me lately of a most successful posting-master in a large English city. He was asked, " To what, under God, do you most attribute your success? " and he at once replied, " To having closed my gates on the Lord's Day." The friend to whom I have referred had advised him to do this, at an early stage of his business career. It was very difficult to do. The first week, it cost him the loss of one of his best customers. But God prospered and blessed him. The customer who had left him came back, after a few months, and brought another to him every way as good.

I met, not long since, a gentleman who, in early life, had been on a coffee plantation in Ceylon. He entered on this work at the age of three-and-twenty. He would not drink; he would not swear; he would not work on the Lord's Day, and for a while had much to bear in consequence. But he persisted in doing what he thought right, and at length he carried the day. His workers brought in as many coffee-berries in six days as others did in seven. They were in better trim after the rest of the Sabbath than those who had worked right on; and while this young man, who was ready to make any effort or sacrifice that he might keep a good conscience, lived down opposition and prospered, others who wanted principle, or had not the courage of their convictions, went to utter ruin.

So we are told of a body of emigrants in a distant land, some of whom refused to travel on the Sabbath, and " rested according to the commandment," subjecting themselves to great ridicule and danger in separating from the other and more numerous body, who pushed on, without stopping, week after week, thinking their friends foolish and superstitious in " losing precious time," as they regarded it. But each week, the Sabbath resting-party made up to the other, before the Saturday came round, and were amply vindicated by the result.

I could mention similar things about Sabbath-keeping fishermen, and millers and other tradesmen, and people in private life, who in the first instance seemed to be losers and sufferers, being taunted and ridiculed and persecuted. But where their motive was pure and their conduct in other things was consistent, they always had the best of it in the end.

You remember, during Israel's journey through the wilderness, how those who would not believe God and take His way of it, going out on the Sabbath to gather manna, instead of laying up, the day before, the quantity necessary for two days' use, only punished themselves.

You remember how the neglect of their Sabbath was one of the reasons why Israel lost the Land of Promise and were scattered among the heathen, just as, in observing their Sabbaths, they prospered. When visiting Palestine, a year or two ago, I was greatly struck with the desolation of the land, as fulfilling the threatening of Leviticus xxvi. 34, 35 : " Then shall the land rest, and enjoy her Sabbaths. As long as it lieth desolate it shall have rest; even the rest which it had not in your Sabbaths, when ye dwelt upon it."

We often hear of criminals and other evildoers ascribing their fall to certain causes. Some have ascribed it to disobedience to parents; some to their first undetected, and, as they regarded it, successful lie, or cheating, or act of dishonesty; some to meddling with drink; and many to the neglect of the Lord's Day. There are Christian men who have made special inquiry as to this subject, and, as the result of such inquiry, have stated the following startling facts. I cannot vouch for the accuracy of the details, but if the figures describe anything like the reality, they are solemnly suggestive. Of 350 executions, nine out of every ten traced their first fall to Sabbath-breaking. Of 1232 convicts, 1206 had been Sabbath-breakers. One criminal, far gone in sin, accounted for it in these ominous words, " That was the effect of breaking the Sabbath when I was a boy."

These facts are amply borne out by the testimony of the famous Sir Matthew Hale, Lord Chief Justice of England, whose views, embodied in the following well-known lines, deserve to be remembered and laid to heart—

" A Sabbath well spent
Brings a week of content,
And health for the toils of the morrow;
But a Sabbath profaned,
Whatsoe'er may be gained,
Is a sure forerunner of sorrow."

Surely the " Pearl of Days " is worthy of being jealously guarded against every hand that would rob us of it.

II. The Manner of its Observance.—A few words will suffice as to this. 1. *Resting from the employments and recreations of other days.* What a blessing the Sabbath is, in bringing us *rest*—alike from work and from play! Sometimes the one is as hard as the other. There are some things which *must* be done on the Sabbath, and the doing of these is permitted or required. We are in the habit of calling these " works of *necessity* and *mercy*." But beyond that, God says : " In it thou shalt not do any work." We never would have had a Sabbath at all, if God had not given it to us—not even a Sabbath of bodily rest. We may well take it as He gives it to us, and be thankful for it.

Surely six days out of the seven, every week, are enough to devote more specially to " the things which are seen and temporary," which you shall soon have done with for ever. Surely one whole day out of the seven, every week, is not too much to devote to " the things which are unseen and eternal," which will soon be the only things that are of any concern to you. The eternal world is very real, and very near to each of you. Should you not be seeking to learn all you can about it, and be diligent in making preparation for it? Not that this should all be left to the one day. It may well be in your thoughts every day of the week. But there is so much to occupy the mind and distract the attention on other days, that we may well be glad to have one whole day to devote to the one great subject. Is it not enough to have six days for reading books of travel and adventure, and newspapers, and

journals, which have only to do with the things of time? Is it too much to spend one day in reading and studying the Word of God, and other books that explain and shed light upon it—the Guide-Book for Heaven? Is it not enough to have six days for music of other kinds, reserving the Sabbath for the praise and worship of God? Is it not enough to have six days for needful recreation, without carrying it into the Lord's Day? Is it not enough to have six days for the work of time, devoting the remaining one to the great business of eternity? Surely, surely, as there is a hereafter—a life to come, to which the present is but the entrance—it has a right to claim one day all to itself!

I am sure you would not like to see the Sabbath done away with—shops all open—the people all working—all sorts of amusement indulged in—everything going on just as on weekdays. And yet every disregard of God's day on your part, is doing what you can, to bring about such a state of things.

2. *Spending the day in God's worship and service.* The Sabbath has been given to us for this great purpose. No one will deny the duty and privilege of worshipping and serving God, on all the other days of the week. But if we had not the special time and opportunity provided for us on the Sabbath, there would be danger of falling away from God's worship altogether. The Sabbath is the great guard against this danger. The church, the family, the Sabbath School, the closet—all have their special place to fill on that day, as they could not on any other. The Psalmist in the 84th Psalm says—"A day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord." "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob."

And so as regards *service*. There is work for us to do, for God and for others. If we can do anything in our own home, that has the first claim on us. The poor, the sick, the sorrowful; the discouraged and solitary and friendless—we have these to help and care for. And the Sabbath is the special time for this.

This does not at all mean that the Sabbath should be a gloomy and unattractive day. I would fain have happy Sabbaths for old and young. I am sure there is plenty to make you happy. Why should there not be pleasant yet profitable social intercourse in all our homes? I would like to see our young people trying to make the day as happy as it can be made, to each other. I saw three young people lately, spending a happy Sabbath evening. Hymn after hymn was sung in parts; chapter after chapter of an interesting Sabbath-day book was read—there was nothing of weariness, and I am sure they were sorry when the evening came to an end. What pleasant Sabbath evenings you might have, with the big Family Bible and its well-known pictures, the "Pilgrim's Progress," the "Sunday Album," or Text-book, the library book or magazine, and conversation about the things of God, and far more singing of "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" than most of us have.

How much you might do to help each other to keep the Sabbath—by example, by warning, by praying, by encouraging each other. I believe if the *children* would but take it up, and make it their business, with God's blessing, Sabbath-breaking might largely be put a stop to. I wish it were the custom to "*begin the Sabbath on Saturday night*," as it has been expressed, instead of carrying Saturday night, as is often done, into the Sabbath morning. Something might be done to improve matters in this respect. I have seen it mentioned that the Jews, after the time of the captivity, when they had learned to value their Sabbaths, were accustomed to light, at sunset of the day before, a candle, which was called *the Sabbath candle*, as indicative of the joy with which they welcomed the returning Sabbath; so that when the little

ones saw the Sabbath candle lighted, it would be the signal for shouts of gladness. I wish we had our "Sabbath candle" lighted on Saturday night—that Saturday night had more of the Sabbath about it.

Your earthly Sabbaths will soon be over. Seek to make the most of them. Let your Bible be more your companion. Seek to have more of the spirit of a young boy who, when told, on one of the last Sabbaths of his life, to stop reading because the light was gone, left his little chair, which he had put close to the window, saying, "The light of the fire will do, till I finish this nice chapter."

What have *you* made of your Sabbaths? What are you making of them? Are you doing any good? Are you getting any good? I never heard of anyone, when he came to die, regretting that he had been too strict in keeping the Sabbath—in reading his Bible, and praying and thinking about his soul, and taking all the help Heavenward that he could get. You will never have any such regret. Oh let this word ring in your ear wherever you go, "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy."—*Rev. J. H. Wilson, D.D.*

The Fleet of Fishing Boats

"*And there were with Him other little ships.*"—*St Mark iv.* 35-39.

To understand these words, dear children, we must read the whole story: "And the same day, when the even was come, He saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took Him even as He was in the ship. And there were also with Him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake Him, and say unto Him, Master, carest Thou not that we perish? And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm."

Now, here was a *miracle!* Indeed, there was nothing wonderful in a number of people getting into a ship and sailing over the sea. There was nothing wonderful in several other little ships keeping company with them. There was nothing wonderful in a great storm of wind arising, and the waves leaping over the bulwarks and drenching the decks, and rushing down into the cabins and terrifying the passengers. There was nothing wonderful in any particular passenger being found asleep on a pillow at such a time—he may have been so tired, so very tired before he lay down, that he would not hear the uproar. There was nothing wonderful in a person keeping his self-possession even when awakened suddenly, and when he opens his eyes on such as scene; many captains and sailors do the same.

No, dear children; but the wonderful thing was the stilling of the tempest—the wonderful thing was, that when He (whoever He was) got up and walked to the ship's side, and said to the wind "Hush," and to the sea "Peace," instantly the wind ceased to bellow, and the waves ceased their furious tossing, and there was a *great calm!*

If you have ever been on the ocean, or even at places like Brighton or Ramsgate, and have seen the awful power of the winds and waves—how they will snap a ship's yards as you would break a stick, and toss a huge vessel hither and thither like a cork; and if you have noticed how often it takes two or three days for the waves to get quiet after a gale, then you will agree with me that this was a miracle—a thing to be wondered at.

I spoke of Brighton and Ramsgate, but this did not happen there; it took place far away from England, on the Lake of Galilee. The Lake of Galilee

is a large sheet of fresh water in Palestine; it is six miles wide, and seven miles long; it is fed at one end and emptied at the other by the River Jordan, which flows into it at the north, and quits it at the south. It is full of fine fish. All round it are high mountains, and it was down one of the ravines of these mountains that the storm rushed so violently. There lies that noble lake to-day, if you and I could travel to it—it is really to be seen, and people are looking at it to-day. There to-day, the sun is shining on its sparkling surface—the very same sun which is shining upon us. Those snow-white clouds, which are now going over our heads, may have been formed by moisture drawn up out of the Lake of Galilee; at any rate, a few days back they make have been reflected on its bosom as in a looking-glass. Yes, dear children, if you said the word, and supposing we had the time and the money, we might start this afternoon from Southampton in a steamer, and this day three weeks we might be fishing together in a "little ship" on the very spot where, eighteen hundred years ago, Peter and John flung their nets!

Not long since, a party of English travellers were standing on a cliff which hangs over the lake. Presently they saw a boat with a good many men in it pulling for the shore. Close after them came a dark, ugly-looking cloud—it seemed to be chasing them. Flash went the lightning, bang went the thunder —it was as if it had fired a cannon at them; and the gentlemen got very anxious about the boat, and those who were in it. And now the storm began in earnest; the winds yelled like wild Indians, and the rain came down in torrents, and the waves shook their white crests, and raced after one another as if they were mad. This lasted for nearly an hour; but when it was over, and the sun shone out, the boat was seen all safe and sound. They had cast anchor until the storm blew over; and now they took to their oars again, and shook out a flag, and steered for the beach, with a song and chorus which showed that they were sailors; and it was found that the boat had been built in New York and sent to Palestine in a frigate: there it was landed and carried on camels to the lake, where two American officers and a crew got into it, and set out on an exploring exepdition on the Lake of Galilee and the River Jordan.

Observe, the English gentlemen on the cliff saw the Lake of Galilee, they saw the ship, they saw the storm, they saw the tumult on board, just as we read of it in this chapter; but when the commander stood up with the rudder-bands in his hands, he could not still the tempest. He wore a gold-banded cap, and glittering epaulettes, and he bade them furl the blue and crimson flag, and he said to his men, "Ship oars! let go the anchor, and we shall live it out!" but that was all he could do. Had those same English gentlemen been standing on that cliff eighteen hundred years ago, they would have seen the lake, the ship, the storm; and they would have seen a Person get up from the pillow on which He was sleeping, face the tempest, and bid it stop; stretch out His arm over the sea, and bid it be quiet; and immediately they would have seen "a great calm!"

Jesus wrought many miracles at this lake. He had "much people" in its cities—Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Capernaum. It was quiet, and He could get away from the crowds which followed Him everywhere on land. I dare say He ate many a meal, and had many a sweet sleep a mile or two out on it. It was also important that He should show His authority over the sea, as well as over the earth, thus proving Himself to be "Lord of all." So He walked on its unfrozen waters; He called five fishermen from it to be His Apostles; He made one of its fish to bring Him up a piece of money to pay His tax to Cæsar; He told his disciples exactly where they would find a shoal of great fishes, when they had been fishing all night and had caught nothing.

If any of you, dear children, go to sea, and in the middle of a long, long voyage to Australia or America, are caught in a hurricane, and the captain looks anxious, and you know that there is danger, remember that Jesus is with you, and that He has been in a storm at sea Himself, and that He can control the wind and the waves.

But now let us look at the text. It speaks of certain "little ships," and it tells us that these little ships were with Christ on the Lake of Galilee when He worked this miracle. Most likely the people on board were seafaring men, who loved Christ as many seafaring men do now. Oh, it is pleasant to think that stout knees are bent on the forecastles, and hymns sung high up in the maintops of hundreds of gallant ships! There are those in our merchant-service and in our navy now, who would put the helm "hard a-port" to follow a vessel, with Christ on board, anywhere.

It was eventide, the sun was setting, and it was a lovely time on the water; so Christ said to His Apostles, "Let us pass over unto the other side" (of the lake); "and when they had sent away the multitude" (who were thronging to hear Him), "they took Him even as He was, in the ship." This ship, I suspect, was nothing more than a large fishing-boat, lent to Him and His Apostles, or hired by them for the occasion. But directly those who had boats of their own saw that He was going across, they wanted to accompany Him, so they jumped into their boats, and spread their small sails, and stood away after Him. I should not wonder if they kept close to His ship, so that they might exchange words every now and then with those on board. By and by they would miss the object of all their attention from the deck, and they would be told not to make a noise, as He had laid down for a little rest: so there they floated—these "other little ships"—by the side of the vessel in which the Son of God—"God manifest in the flesh"—lay asleep on a pillow! But they soon began to notice the increasing strength of the wind; the waves came leaping and hissing before it, the sky grew dark, and the tornado was upon them. If the big ship was in peril, how much more were they! The water poured in in spite of them; "they reeled to and fro, and staggered like a drunken man, and were at their wits' end." "Oh," they said, "we are lost! another such billow as that, and we shall be swamped! another such gust, and we shall go over!" Perhaps some of them were very sorry that they had ventured out after Christ, and declared that if they were only safe ashore they would never do it again.

But ah! dear children, that was their *faithlessness*. Why did they doubt? They were safe just because they were with Christ! At the right moment He appeared on deck again, and rebuked the wind, "and there was a great calm." They benefited by it just as much as Christ's ship did. And then they saw the miracle! They saw how blessed it was to be with Christ in a storm. They saw how needless it was to fear when Christ is close by. They saw how they ought to trust Him in the most trying hour; and they went on their voyage rejoicing; and when they got to land they told all their friends what they had witnessed—how that the winds and the sea obeyed "this Man!"

Now, it has struck me that we may learn at least three important lessons from these "other little ships," and what befell them.

They teach us—First, That we should always be ready to follow Jesus; Secondly, That we may sometimes meet with trials in following Him; and Thirdly, That we are safe whilst we keep close to Him.

First, they teach us that we should always be ready to follow Jesus. These little ships put to sea after Him directly Christ put to sea, and wherever He went they went. Had He gone north or south, east or west, they would have trimmed their sails accordingly. They were determined to be with Christ.

They remind us of Ruth, who, when her mother-in-law kissed her, and bade her farewell, was by no means to be got rid of so easily. "Nay," she said; "entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me" (Ruth i. 16, 17). They remind us of the poor demoniac in the Gadarene country, who, when Christ had cured him, and wished him good-bye, "besought Him that he might be with him" evermore (Luke viii. 38).

So it should be with us, dear children. We should make it our study to follow Christ; that is, to follow His commands, His wishes, His example—to keep putting our hearts into His keeping—to spend each day in endeavouring to get nearer to Him, to know more of Him, to be more like Him. We cannot see Him—oh, that we could see Him!—but we can believe that His eye is upon us, and do whatever we think will please Him.

Suppose your beloved mother were to die and go to Heaven, and before she left you, she gave you a little book in her own handwriting, telling you what she would like you to do when she was no more. If you sought to do all these things, you would be following her, though she was out of sight. And has not Jesus told us what He likes us to do? Has He not done it all Himself, to show us that it can be done, and how it ought to be done? And shall we not follow Him? Will you lie idle high and dry, like a good-for-nothing boat on the shore? Will you not rather launch away at His call, and go sailing after Him, till at last you come in sight of Him in the Fair Haven above?

Oh, how happy are they who have thus overtaken Him, and are now with Him, as those "little ships" were, beholding His glory, and basking in His smiles! I see their white robes, and hear their glad songs, and long to be amongst them. God speed them thither!

Secondly, these "little ships" teach us that we shall sometimes meet with trials in following Christ. It is only right that you should know this, and prepare for it. These "little ships" had a pleasant time of it for a while, but ere long they discovered that it was not all smooth sailing. They were caught by the storm, and tossed about, and drenched, and frightened. The sailing after Christ did not insure them a calm passage; nay, it seemed the very thing which brought them into trouble. And, dear children, so you will find it if you try to be Christians. As long as you do as the world does, and give your heart its own way, things will go smoothly—Satan will not trouble you; but directly he sees that your anchor is up, and that you are making sail Heavenwards, then he will begin to harass you. He will send his fiery darts into you. He will waylay you with temptations. He will stir up mutinies in your own bosom. He will set others to laugh at you, and point the finger at you, and ridicule you. He will try to make prayer difficult to you. He will try to make religion appear a gloomy thing to you. He will get you to do many things almost before you know it, and then he will say, "God is angry with you; it is of no use to endeavour to serve and please Him any more." "We are not ignorant of his devices." I have seen hundreds of boys and girls taken in by them—I have seen hundreds of boys and girls turned back by them. Like Mr Pliable in the "Pilgrim's Progress," they have set out for glory as if nothing should daunt them, no one travelled fast enough for them; but their very first trial upset all their fine resolutions, and they turned about, telling their more persevering companions that "they might possess the brave country alone for them."

Yet you must not suppose, dear children, that the "little ship" is always roughing it; there are blessed intervals of "quietness and assurance." Sometimes they last a long while. One "little ship" has more of them than another, according as God sees best; but all have them. Then their "peace flows as a river"; the water is so clear that they can see the golden sands; the sky is bright blue; "the south wind blows softly," and with the help of a glass they think they can make out the coasts of the "better country," the "land flowing with milk and honey."

And not only so, dear children; not only will you have blessed intervals of "quietness and assurance," but—

Thirdly, these "other little ships" teach us that we are safe whilst we keep close to Christ.

The storm was a tremendous one—it must have sunk them if they had been alone; but they were "with Him," therefore they weathered it. His presence did not prevent the storm—perhaps Satan raised it on purpose to drown Him and His Apostles, and all who were with Him. "Now I have got them," he said; "they shall never set foot on shore again." Neither did Christ at first interfere for them. "He was asleep on a pillow." They were sinking, but He slept on. He would try their faith to the utmost. He wished to prove whether they really believed that they could not be lost just because they were with Him, and He was with them. But "they doubted," and running to Him, they woke Him up, crying, "Master, Master, we perish!" And then "He arose, and rebuked the wind," and the raging of the water, and they were safe! Satan did his worst; the waves did their worst; the winds did their worst—but they were safe! They went through it all—these "other little ships"—they came out of it all, they were safe—because they had kept close to Jesus.

How would you feel were you cast adrift in the middle of the Atlantic in a washing-tub? There was a sailor-lad who clung to a floating plank for two whole days and nights, a thousand miles from shore; and all that time it rained and froze, and blew a hurricane; but when he was picked up, his eyes rolled, and his hair "stood on end." Poor fellow! he was crazy. How differently he would have felt had he spent these two terrible days and nights on board a large vessel, with plenty to eat and drink, and a nice warm berth, and cheerful companions, and a wise captain to take the responsibility. He would not have minded the wet and cold, he would not have minded the howling wind or the darkness. So with us: we "shall have tribulation"—storms will come; but if we are following Jesus, we may lay aside our fears, we are under His protection—we "shall never perish." Whenever, therefore, we see a storm rising—whenever we are in danger—let us "wake Him," as it were, by our prayers, and He will either still it, or bring us through it. "God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. x. 13): "So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Heb. xiii. 6).

In conclusion: I wonder whether you, the dear child who is now reading this—whether you are one of these "other little ships"; I wonder whether you can be said to be sailing across the "Sea of Time" under Christ's convoy! Yes, I wonder!

All children are not. I must say that I know a great many children who are sailing about hither and thither just as they please. I have gone very near some of them, and warned them, and besought them in Christ's name to be wise, and come away after Him. I have put my trumpet to my lips as we passed, and shouted, "Where are you bound?" And when they have

answered, "We don't care"; I have shouted again, "Beware of quicksands—beware of the great pirate—beware of storms!—'Come, ye children, hearken unto me, I will teach you the fear of the Lord.'" And when they have answered again, "What is 'the fear of the Lord?'" I have said, "It is to 'eschew evil, and do good; to seek peace, and ensue it'" (1 Pet. iii. 11). I have given them the gracious message, "I love them that love Me, and those that seek Me early shall find Me!" (Prov. viii. 17.)

But how few have pondered what they heard! I have watched them with tearful eyes till I could see them no more; and I shall never see them again! Oh, they will be dashed upon the rocks, or they will be upset in a gale.

I am anxious, therefore, about you, my dear child. I am anxious to find out what cargo you are taking in—whether "gold, silver, precious stones, or wood, hay, stubble." I am anxious to find out whose flag you are sailing under—Christ's, or the great enemy's. I am anxious to find out about your crew—whether they are those excellent mariners, Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, Temperance; or those traitors, Pride, Envy, Hatred, Strife. Is the "Book of books" your chart? Is your delight in it, and do you "meditate in it day and night," and are you steering by its directions? Are you ever "looking unto Jesus" as your pole-star? Does your heart point true to Him, as the needle points true to the north?

I am anxious about all these things, and until I am sure of them I cannot tell you whether you will have a prosperous voyage or not. But this I can say, that if you have the least desire to put yourself under Christ's convoy, you may. He says, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." Only, do not delay; "get away" at once. Do not wait for others to start: do not wait till you get older: do not wait till you fancy yourself better. Just quietly make up your mind, "I will go after Christ." There He is waiting for you, calling to you to follow Him. Push off, then, and let nothing discourage you. Be sure of this, that nothing can really prevent you. Push off, and good speed you!

—Rev. J. J. Bolton.

The Second shall be First

"The glory of the latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts."—Haggai ii. 9.

The former house was the temple built by Solomon. Long afterwards, you know, it was destroyed by the King of Babylon, when he carried the Jews into captivity, and left Jerusalem with its ruined temple to lie waste. But when seventy years of exile had passed, you remember that God put it into the heart of Cyrus, King of Persia, to let the Jews return to their own country; and, under Zerubbabel and others, a great many of them went back. After their arrival in the city of their fathers, they set to work to rebuild the house of God. Haggai was a prophet among them at that time. He brought to Zerubbabel and the people from God the message contained in the text. He told them that the new temple they were building would be more glorious than Solomon's had been. That was a very cheering message, but it was not a little startling, and difficult to be believed. For we know that the temple erected by the son of David was very grand indeed. We learn how rich and splendid it was, from descriptions of it in the books of Kings and Chronicles. The stones of which it was built were large and beautiful, and were hewn at a distance, and brought, when properly shaped and polished, and laid quietly in their place. The inside of the walls was all covered with boards of costly

and beautiful wood. The beams were of strong cedar. The holy place, as well as the holiest of all where the ark was put, were all laid over with pure gold. The doors were richly carved and gilded. All the furniture was of gold, or plated with that precious metal, and everything finished in the richest and costliest style. Two great pillars of brass stood at the porch of the temple. In the courts were the great molten sea, the lavers, and the altar of burnt-offering, all of bright brass. The instruments of service were made of the same metal burnished. Altogether, the temple, as Solomon said it should be, was "high," and "exceeding magnifical."

Now, does the text mean that the second temple, built by Zerubbabel and the returned captives, was to be larger, richer, and more splendid than the grand house of Solomon? Was it really to be expected that a handful of exiles, come back to a city in ruins, would be able to rival the doings of the great King of Israel? That was not to be thought of. Yet when you look at the verse immediately before, it might seem that, after all, this was the meaning of the text: "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts." Now, that might appear to be spoken to tell the Jews that, though they were poor, they would get plenty of the precious metals yet. God had all the treasures of kings and all the mines of earth in His hand, and could He not bring to His people such stores as would enable them to make the house all shine with golden glory? We find, however, that God did not do so at the time. For after the house was finished, there took place a very touching scene, which plainly shows us that this latter temple was not outwardly very splendid. When the structure was completed, the young shouted; but the old among the people, whose memory could go back and recall the grandeur of Solomon's temple, wept aloud. The new house, in their eyes, was so poor and mean in comparison. But, perhaps, you may say, The text means that God would afterwards send them wealth of gold to clothe it all over, and furnish it in the costliest way. And it is true, that long after, Herod the Great spent vast sums of money in enlarging and adorning the temple, so as to make it the marvel and the pride of the Jewish nation. We are told that forty-six years were spent in the work, and that the result was very splendid. You recollect that near the time of Jesus' death, His disciples called His attention to it, and wished Him to admire it. "Master," they said, "see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!" There is no reason to think, however, that even after it was thus beautified, the second temple was at all so rich as Solomon's. And it is certain that it was not this sort of glory that the text promised. Why, then, do you ask, were the Jews told that the silver and the gold were the Lord's? To teach them that it was not for want of stores in abundance that God did not enable Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest to make the new temple grander than the old. But, then, He had something better to give them than precious metals. And although in outward show the second temple was so much meaner than the first, it was to have a lustre all its own, with which the former splendour could not be compared. Without the gold, Zerubbabel's temple would be far more glorious than Solomon's. My design, in this discourse, is to show you how this was to be. For what reasons and in what respects was the second temple to have greater glory than the first? I answer, on three accounts. I. Because Christ was to come to it. II. Because Christ was to make atonement for sin there. III. Because it was to give place to a new and better Temple than either Solomon's or itself.

I. Christ, the promised Messiah, was to come to it.—There is a beautiful title given to Christ in the seventh verse. He is spoken of as the Desire of all nations. How is that? you say. You know well enough that the Jews, taught

by their prophets from the beginning, were looking for Him when He came. But how did the blind heathen desire Him? Different things must be stated to give an answer to this question. There was in the hearts even of the dark nations a blind seeking after Him. I have heard it said that insane persons, or persons in delirium from fever, will sometimes go away back to childhood and bring up things altogether forgotten in sane hours. I have heard of one who, at a time when the brain had reeled in disease, was overheard speaking a language of which she was quite ignorant when well. It was the language of her early childhood, altogether forgotten, till the fever heat quickened the memory, and brought it back again. So, I sometimes think the hearts of the heathen must have occasionally called up, as in a dream, some dim feeling of the old happy state, from which sin cast the race down. Besides, and this is plainer, conscience and heart cried out for peace, such peace as Jesus came to give, and alone can bestow. Then, yet further, by the scattering of the Jews, and the circulation of the Scriptures, an expectation of some great Deliverer to appear in the East was widely spread, when Christ was about to come. Now it is evident, from the verse where the Desire of all nations is spoken of, that His coming was to make the Temple glorious; for immediately after His coming is foretold, it is added, "And I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts."

It is not wonderful that this coming of Christ to the house of God in Jerusalem should be said to give it glory. For the Messiah was no other than God manifest in flesh. So Malachi, predicting this very coming, says, "The Lord, Whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, Whom ye delight in." The temple He visits is His own; He is its Lord. Now, an earthly king's visit to a house makes it famous. People show you over the land, rooms in old castles where monarchs were born or died, houses where princes slept, cups from which they drank. There is a charm to loyal hearts in Scotland about the spot where the king goes yearly, in the autumnal months, to sojourn. Who of us all, if the king should cross our threshold, would not speak with some pride of the honour? But oh, what is the step of a king to that of God in our nature! Do you not feel that, of all lands, Palestine bears the palm for interest in your eyes? And is not the chief source of that interest connected with the fact that Jesus—

"Trod with blessed feet
Judæa's sand?"

You understand, therefore, at once, why His appearance in the courts of His own Temple brought a new and matchless glory into it.

It is, indeed, true that in Solomon's temple God showed His presence gloriously. When it was dedicated, as you recollect, such brightness filled it that the priests could not go in. I dare say you have sometimes tried, when the sun was shining unclouded, to look up in his face with open eye. You know how dazzling and painful the result was. Now the temple must have been filled with a light brighter than the sun. Again, we are told that in the Holy of holies, over the mercy-seat, between the winged cherubim, there was a glorious light of the Divine Presence shining. But then, these lights were but outward, and were signs and symbols only. It is remarkable that they did not appear in the second temple. There was no descent of sun-like splendour when it was consecrated. The ark, as the Jews say, had perished, and the light which dwelt above its lid was gone. He, however, of Whom these things were types came. His face did not dazzle the eye, but there shone through it the presence and the character of God, though it was a Sufferer's

countenance. "The Word was made flesh," writes John, the beloved disciple, "and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth." "He that hath seen Me," said Jesus Himself, "hath seen the Father."

Yes, young friends, Christ's coming made the latter house more glorious by far than the first—made it unspeakably glorious. Suppose you were to visit a house belonging to your father. Suppose it finely furnished, with books to read, windows with beautiful prospects before them to look out at, pictures on the walls, musical instruments in the rooms, and everything for comfort by night and by day. Suppose, further, that there was one room in the house, where your father's portrait was hung up, fair to see. But, on the other hand, suppose you go to a second house of your father's, less superbly furnished, less beautiful to gaze on, but there your father dwells, you can see his own very face there, and hear his very voice; would you prefer greater grandeur with the dead portrait, or less grandeur with living love to brighten it? Would not your father's presence, also, in the first supposed house, put a new lustre on every object in it, except, perhaps, the portrait itself. Now thus it was with the two temples: the picture of Divine things, amidst much splendour of gold, was found in Solomon's; but God Himself came down to that which the restored captives less richly built.

II. Christ came to make atonement for sin, in the second temple, and so to make it glorious.—In the close of the verse it is said, "And in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts." Now peace is made by the blood of the Cross of Jesus, and the shedding of that blood to secure peace on earth, was the most glorious event of time. It is true, Jesus' blood was not literally shed in the Temple—it did not, like the blood of the animal sacrifices, flow in the sacred courts; but He Who visited the Temple came to die for men, and so to fulfil all the typical sacrifices that had been offered there for ages. The brazen altar of burnt-offering stood in the court around the holy oracle, to show that entrance into the presence of God could only be had by offering of life—there must be suffering for men on earth, in order to their finding access into Heaven; and it was partly a sign of the same truth that was given when Jesus died on the tree ouside the gate of Jerusalem. The old economy had a daily succession and profusion of oblations, in the form of animal death—many victims fed its altar-fires; and there was something grand, though awful, in the multitude of its sacrifices. But the very multitude and continuance of them showed that they could not take away sin. Oh, how much grander was the sight of that One Sacrifice, to which all others looked forward, and which fulfilled them all, and made them no more necessary or fitting! Surely that Temple had a superior glory, which, could it have spoken, might have said, as Jesus walked its courts, See Him to Whom all my services have pointed, in Whom alone they had significance and worth; see Him come at length—"Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world."

How different, we may here reflect, is the world's estimate of glory from the Bible's! The world has allowed war and conquest to take the word "glory" to be very much their own. So we speak of a glorious victory, a glorious campaign, a glorious death. But the Bible joins glory and peace. In natural things we do the same. We do not call the hurricane, the earthquake, the conflagration, glorious; but sunshine, summer calm, summer noon, the summer landscape rich and in peace, take the epithet appropriately. Around Christ Jesus, and His work on earth, you see the glory of peace richly shining. His grand mission was peace. His life was peace. He taught peace. He bought peace. The Angels sang peace when He was born. He

left a legacy of peace when He went to the Cross to die. When He rose up in the ship and said, "Peace, be still," to raging winds and waves, He gave a picture of what He came to do. He gave another when He rode on an ass's colt into Jerusalem. And when we look calmly at it, we see that in making peace is true glory. It is a grand thing to do so anywhere. It is a sweet work to hush the quarrels of children. It is a fine thing to stop the sound of strife in neighbourhoods. It is a noble thing to heal divisions in a church —to induce contending nations to lay down their arms—to bring alienated friends together again. But oh, how glorious to restore peace between God and man! This the second temple saw Jesus do, by the offering of Himself without spot to God.

III. The second temple had a glory beyond the first, because it was to give place to a new and better Temple.—That is a strange saying of the wise man, "The day of one's death is better than the day of his birth." How can that be? Is it better to die than to live? No; but the end of the present life is better than its commencement, because it is the beginning of a new and higher life. It closes life, but if it open immortality, what then? John the Baptist was the greatest of all the prophets before Christ, for this reason, as for others, that he was the last of them. You know, I dare say, the star of evening and of morning. It is the same star, in different positions. It shines with much the same brightness in both, and is always beautiful. But why is there a special delightfulness about it when it adorns the eastern sky? Because it leads in the dawn. Because it is soon to

"Melt away into the light of Heaven."

So the second temple was to be the last of its kind. It shone when the night of the old age was far spent, and the day at hand. A new Temple was to rise in the new age. That Temple had its foundation laid when Christ died and rose again. It began to be built on the Day of Pentecost. It is still a-building. We are in it. If we are Christ's we are stones in it, built up in faith and love. Or take another view, suggested by what happened in the building of the temple of Solomon. Far off in the quarry and ground apportioned for the work of hewing, we are being shaped and fashioned and polished, to be laid noiselessly in our place in the great Temple of salvation as it shall appear completed and filled with God on Mount Zion above.

There are four remarks I wish you to notice, in closing.

1. This text proves that the Jews are wrong in believing that Christ has not yet come. For in the temple of Zerubbabel God was to give peace. The Desire of all nations was to appear there. But the second temple has long been destroyed. Not one stone of it has been left above another. If, then, the Messiah has not come, this prophecy has not been made good.

2. This text shows that outward splendour is not true glory. It is not in a person. There may be beauty of face and nobility of form; there may be rich and splendid dress; but if the soul be foul with sin, or meanly robed, there is no real glory. It is not otherwise in a church. A fine edifice—a crowd of hearers—riches, numbers, gifts of mind, will not make a church shine in the eye of God, if faith, and love, and life in Christ be wanting. What makes day glorious? Not the clouds; not the hills; not the woods, rivers, seas, but the sun that clothes them all with his light. So is it with the church: everything is dark, if Christ the Sun be not there.

3. This text suggests such questions as these—Have you desired Christ? Have you sought Him? Has He come to you? Has He made your hearts temples, glorious with His presence?

4. This text shows what will be the great glory of Heaven. "The Lord God giveth it light, and the Lamb is the glory thereof."

—*Rev. J. Edmond, D.D.*

The Beauty of Christ's Kingdom

"*His Kingdom ruleth over all.*"—*Ps. ciii.* 19.

He is seated at the Right Hand of God the Father. And He sits there as King. "The government is upon His shoulder." It is easier for us to think of Jesus as a poor man than as a great King. We read much of Him as "a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief." We know that He was so poor that though "the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, yet He had not where to lay His head!" We think of Him as healing the sick and raising the dead, and working many miracles as He "went about doing good." All this is easy for us to think about, but it is not so easy for us to think about Jesus as having a Great Kingdom; yet this is what we must now try to do.

When young people hear men talking about governments or kingdoms, they are very apt to think: "Well, these are not things that are of any importance to us. Men and women may attend to these things, but they are not for the young to think or care about." But when we come to talk about the Kingdom that Jesus has it is very different. We are all interested in this Kingdom. It has something to do with every one of us. From the oldest scholar in one of our Bible classes down to the youngest scholar in the infant school, all should wish to know this Kingdom. This Kingdom has a great deal to do with every one of us. And so we should all try to find out what sort of a Kingdom it is. And this is what we wish now to speak about. We want to show that there is great beauty in the Kingdom of Jesus. This is our subject now: The Beauty of Christ's Kingdom.

The Kingdom of Jesus is a beautiful Kingdom, because it rules over all the greatest things. One of the greatest things that we know of, is this world in which we live. If we could take a line and go all around the outside of this world and measure it, we should find that line about twenty-four thousand miles long. If we could bore a hole right through the earth, from just where we stand to the other side of it, and then drop a line through, we should find that line measuring the diameter of the earth, would be about eight thousand miles in length. This vast world is full of rocks, and sand, and earth, and water. How big this world is! How hard it must be to move it! Why, if the world should stand still, all the men that ever lived, with all the horses to help them, and all the steam-engines ever made, if they were all put together, could not move the world a single inch, no, not the hundreth part of an inch. But Jesus, in His beautiful Kingdom, moves this great world a great deal easier than you or I can bend our little finger.

But though this world that we live in seems so great to us, it is really a very little world compared to some others. Yonder is the great sun that shines upon us every day. That is a world, too. And it is a much larger world than ours. It is so much larger that a million of worlds like ours could be put inside of the sun. It is very easy to say a million, but it is not so easy to understand just what a million means. Suppose we should begin to-morrow morning at six o'clock to count. And suppose that we should count about as fast as the clock ticks—one, two, three, four—and

so on. And then suppose we should go on counting at that rate till six o'clock at night, without stopping to eat, or to drink, or to rest; that would be counting twelve hours a day. We could only count at that rate about forty-three thousand in a day. At this rate it would take us more than twenty-three days, or more than three weeks, counting twelve hours every day, to count a million. Now suppose there was a big hole in the side of the sun, like a bung-hole in a hogshead; and suppose that God should set you and me to fill up the sun by dropping into it worlds like ours, just as we might fill up a hogshead by dropping pebbles into the bung-hole. And suppose that we could pick up worlds like ours, just as easily as we pick up pebbles. Well, now we take our stand by that hole in the side of the sun and try to fill it up. We begin to drop in worlds. As fast as the clock ticks we drop them in—one, two, three, four, five, six—sixty a minute—thirty-six hundred an hour. For twelve hours a day we keep on at this work. It would take us more than twenty-three days, working on at the same rate, to fill up the sun by putting into it a million of worlds like ours. Oh, how wonderfully great that sun must be! And yet Jesus, in His Kingdom, rules that sun. He tells it to shine, and it shines. He tells it to keep on shining, and it keeps on shining. When we look up to the sky at night, we know how many stars we see shining there. Many of them are worlds as large as our sun. Some of them are larger. But the Kingdom of Jesus rules over all those worlds. They all obey Him. They move just where He tells them to move. They do just what He tells them to do.

And then let us look away from the worlds to the Angels. They are wonderful for their greatness. David says, "they excel in strength" (Ps. ciii. 20). Samson, we know, was the strongest man that ever lived. But if the world were full of men like Samson, one Angel would have more strength than all of them put together. Just think for a moment of some of the things which we know that Angels have done, and which show us how wonderful their strength is.

When God wished to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, He sent an Angel to do it. It was an Angel that let loose that storm of fire by which the guilty cities of the plain were burnt and destroyed. When God wished to deliver the children of Israel out of Egypt, He sent an Angel to do it. The Angel passed over the land of Egypt that night, and with his unseen sword smote all the first-born of the Egyptians, both of man and beast. Someone was dead in every family, and one long, loud wail of sorrow was heard all through the land. It was an Angel that blew the trumpet when God came down to give the Israelites the Law on the top of Mount Sinai. And the blast of that trumpet made the earth shake and the mountains tremble.

When God wished to deliver Jerusalem from the army of the Assyrians that was encamped against it, He sent an Angel to do it. That Angel passed over the Assyrian army at night while they were asleep. He made no noise in passing, but quietly and silently he breathed, as it were, upon them. And with that breath he slew a hundred and eighty-five thousand men. When God wished to deliver the Apostle Peter out of prison, He sent an Angel to do it. This Angel came into the prison where Peter was sleeping and awoke him. Then he touched his chains and they fell off from his limbs. As they were coming out of the prison, they came to a great iron gate leading into the city. This was made fast by bolts and bars. Before the Angel touched it, before he came near to it, he made this gate open, in spite of all its fastenings, as if it were of its own accord. Here we see what single Angels have done. But when Jesus was going to be

crucified, He said that if He should ask the Father in Heaven, He would send Him more than twelve legions of Angels to help Him and deliver Him from His enemies. That would have been more than seventy thousand Angels. All the Angels in Heaven worship Jesus. They all serve and obey Him. His Kingdom ruleth over all the Angels of Heaven.

And then, everything else that is great and powerful is ruled by Him. Storms and tempests, winds and waves, heat and cold, frost and snow, are His servants. His Kingdom ruleth over all these. They all obey Him. They do just what He tells them to do.

When Jesus was on the Sea of Galilee in a storm He fell asleep while the storm was raging. His disciples thought the vessel was going to sink. In their fright they awoke Him and begged Him to save them from being drowned. Jesus got up; went to the side of the vessel, and quietly spoke to the howling winds and foaming waves, saying, "Peace, be still!" They heard Him. They obeyed Him. "And immediately there was a great calm." And Jesus has just the same power to control the winds and waves, and all things now, that He had then. His Kingdom ruleth over all the greatest things. He has "all power in Heaven and on earth." As the prophet Jeremiah says (Jer. xxxii. 17), "He made the Heaven and the earth by His great power and His outstretched arm, and nothing is too hard for Him."

A vessel was at sea in a terrible storm some time ago. The captain gave up all hope of being able to save the ship, and told the passengers to prepare for the worst. Some were crying aloud, and wringing their hands; others were calling upon God to save them. Among these was a Christian man, who remained perfectly calm.

"How can you be so quiet, in the midst of this fearful storm?" asked one of his fellow-passengers.

"My Father in Heaven is ruling this storm," said the Christian. "He can keep the vessel from sinking if He sees best. If I sink I shall still be in my Father's hand. I know I am safe there. Why should I be afraid?"

That was the right use to make of the subject we are now talking about. The Kingdom of Jesus is a beautiful Kingdom, because it rules over all the greatest things.

Another element in the beauty of this Kingdom is that it rules over all the smallest things. On the one hand, nothing is so great that He is unable to manage it; and, on the other hand, nothing is so little that He ever loses sight of it. He can put His hand of power on great worlds, and seas, and oceans, and rivers, and winds, and storms, and make them do just what He wishes them to do. And at the same time He makes use of the little rays of light, and the little grains of sand, to work for Him too. What a little thing a drop of water is! How tiny it seems, as it hangs on the tip of your finger! And yet, when God wished to form the mighty ocean, He made use of these tiny little drops for this purpose! What a little thing the pebble stone was that David put into his sling when he went forth to fight that great giant of Gath! Yet God did more for Israel by that little pebble than by all the thousands of swords and shields in the army of King Saul. What a little thing a coral insect is! And yet God makes use of that tiny insect to do what all the great whales in the sea never could do—build up the coral islands from the bottom of the ocean.

Now let us look at some examples of the way in which God makes use of very little things to protect and save His people when they are in danger, and to comfort them when in trouble.

Some years ago a poor old coloured woman lived in the town of West Chester. She was confined to her bed a helpless cripple. Her home was a little house that stood by itself, where she lived all alone, except that her son, who occasionally called to see her, would sometimes occupy a room in her house. A kind neighbour was in the habit of calling in every day to see her, and to do anything that might be necessary. One cold winter night this neighbour came in as usual. She made everything comfortable, and then left her for the night. About two o'clcok in the morning the old woman awoke, and found that a live coal had fallen from the grate and had set fire to the rag carpet. It burned slowly on, and came nearer and nearer to the bed. There she lay without being able to move hand or foot. There was no one near enough, as she supposed, to hear her if she should call ever so loud. In speaking about it afterwards, she said, "I told the Lord I was quite willing to die, but if He was pleased to let me have my own way, I would rather not be burned to death; and then I waited." The fire gradually crept nearer and nearer. The bed-stead was reached, and the bed-clothes caught fire. It seemed impossible for her to be saved. But just then the door opened. Her son came in, and she was saved! She did not know that he was in the house. As soon as she was able, she asked him how he came there. He said he had returned home late and unexpectedly the night before. Finding her asleep, he retired to his room and went to bed. He awoke just then, which he was not in the habit of doing, and, fearing he might be late for his work, he came down to his mother's room to see what time it was, and found he was just in time to save her from a dreadful death. He wondered how he happened to wake at that very moment. But his mother knew Who wakened him! To wake a man out of sleep is a little thing, yet this is what Jesus, "Whose Kingdom ruleth over all," did to save one of His people from a painful death.

Here is another illustration of the same kind. One of the workmen connected with the railway which runs from Hamburg to Paris had a good wife. As her husband left home one day to attend to his business, she said, as she was in the habit of doing, "Good-bye; may God protect you." This man was stationed at a little watch-house as the signalman. His business was, as the trains came along, to show a signal which meant "Go on!" when all was right, or "Stop!" when anything was wrong. On the evening of the day of which we are speaking he walked along his part of the road to see that all was right before the express train came by. Just as he was returning to his watch-house, he was attacked by two bad men who had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. They took hold of him, threw him down, bound him hand and foot so that he could not move, and gagged him so that he could not speak. Then they laid him across the rails and tied him fast, so that the express train which was coming along might pass over him in the dark and crush him. But that precious Saviour Whose "Kingdom ruleth over all" had heard the prayer of this man's good wife, "God protect you," and intended to answer it. Let us see how He did it.

While this was taking place on the railway, the wife of the poor signalman was alone in her cottage. All at once, without knowing why, she began to feel very anxious about her husband. She became more and more uneasy. She tried to overcome her fear, but in vain. At last she said to herself: "I don't know what this means. I never felt so before. Something's the matter with my husband. I must go and see." So she hurried off to the watch-house. She did not walk, but ran till she reached the place. She

hastens down the embankment. She enters the watch-house, but it is empty. Her husband is not there. She is terribly frightened. Where can he be? She calls him again and again, but there is no answer. She runs, first to the right and then to the left, looking for him; but he is not there. What is the matter? Where can he be? The train is coming; she hears the whistle of the approaching locomotive, and her husband is not at his post to give the expected signal. Almost wild with terror, she hurries back to the watch-house, calling aloud to her husband. Then the thought occurs to her that the signal must be hoisted up, or else her husband will be blamed for neglecting his duty. She hastens to the signal-post and hoists up a signal. In a few minutes the train comes thundering along, but instead of rushing on, it stands still by the watch-house. She intended to hoist the signal which said "Go on," but instead of this, by mistake, she hoisted the signal which said "Stop." And so the train stopped. It was God Who guided her hand. The conductor of the train jumps out, hastens up, and inquires what is the matter. He finds no signalman at the watch-house, but a weeping woman in great distress because she cannot find her husband. Now lanterns are lighted, and they go searching along the road. Soon they find the poor man, bound, gagged, fastened to the rails, and more dead than alive. In an instant he is released and saved. The men who tried to kill him were caught and punished as they deserved to be.

When that woman went up to the signal-post, it was a little thing whether she pulled one rope or another. But Jesus was there. He overruled that little thing so as to save the life of that poor man. And Jesus can overrule little things in the same way to comfort His people when they are in trouble, as well as to save them when in danger.

Here is an illustration that we know to be true, for we are well acquainted with the person to whom it refers. Some years ago, a young lady went with a sick brother to spend the winter in the State of Georgia. That brother was very dear to her. He had taken his father's place when he died, and for years had been the support and comfort, and blessing of the family. But now he was attacked with consumption, and the doctor had ordered him to the south, in the hope of saving his life and of restoring him to health again. His sister, accompanied by a faithful man-servant, went with him. For a while she was cheered by the hope that her brother would get well and return to bless the household. But, as the winter passed away, it began to be doubtful whether he would ever get better. And at last the doctor told the poor sorrowing sister that her brother never could be well again. And then the painful thought came over her that her brother had not many days to live—that she must see him die away from her family—that she must bury him there, among strangers, and then go back alone to her poor afflicted mother. Her heart sank within her, and she felt unspeakably sad at the thought of having to pass through this bitter trial.

At this time she went one day into the garden connected with the house where they were staying, that she might be by herself and think over all her trouble. In a quiet corner of that garden, where no one could see her, she leaned against a tree, and wept in all the sadness of her aching heart. Her brother was dying; her family were all far, far away. A stranger among strangers, it seemed to her as if there never was anyone so sad and lonely as she was. Just then a little piece of paper caught her eye. It was the torn scrap of a newspaper, which the wind seemed to be tossing carelessly about here and there. Presently another breath of wind caught it, brought it near her, and laid it gently down at her feet. Something prompted her

to stoop down and pick it up. She did so, and on turning it over found these beautiful lines printed on that bit of paper:

"*Not all alone!* the whispering trees,
The rippling brook, the starry sky,
Have each peculiar harmonies
To soothe, subdue, and sanctify;
The low, sweet breath of evening's sigh
Hath oft for thee a friendly tone—
To lift thy grateful thoughts on high,
To say thou art *not* all alone!

Not all alone! a watchful eye,
That notes the wandering sparrow's fall
A saving hand is ever nigh;
A gracious ear attends thy call.
When sadness holds thy heart in thrall,
Is oft His tenderest mercy shown;
Seek, then, the balm vouchsafed to all,
And thou canst never be alone!

These sweet words were a great comfort to that poor lonely child of sorrow. If an Angel from Heaven had come down and whispered the words to her, she could not have felt more comforted. That scrap of paper, which someone had thrown carelessly way, was a very little thing; and that breath of wind which blew it to her and laid it down at her feet was a little thing too. But He Whose "Kingdom ruleth over all" was pleased to make use of those little things to cheer the heart of His afflicted servant in her loneliness. And when we consider how Jesus can overrule the smallest things as well as the greatest, to help His people in danger, and to comfort them in trouble, we see what beauty there is in His Kingdom.

But there is another thing about it which shows its beauty, and this is that it rules the greatest things and the smallest things at all times and in all places. Solomon says, "There is a time for everything under the sun." He means by this that there is a particular season when each thing that we have to do must be attended to. If we neglect to attend to it then, it cannot be done at all. For instance, suppose you have a cheque on a bank for fifty dollars. If you want to get that money, you must be sure to go while the bank is open. The banks generally close at three o'clock. If you go there at half-past three, or four o'clock, it will be too late. You cannot get the money then, but will have to wait till the next day. Kings and rulers, and great men generally, have particular days or hours when they can be seen. If you wish them to help you, or to do anything for you, you must go to them at that particular time, or else you will not get the help you want. It is necessary for men to have particular hours for attending to business, because they must have time for eating and sleeping and resting. And they cannot attend to business when they are eating and sleeping and resting. But it is different with Jesus. He never sleeps and never rests. And the beautiful thing about His Kingdom is, that He not only rules over all things, over all the greatest things, and all the smallest things, but He rules them "at all times, and in all places." His arm never gets weary, and never needs any rest. There are no particular hours of the day in which He attends to His business as the Ruler of all things. He is attending to it at all times. In summer and in winter, by day and by night, He

is always ready to hear and answer and help those who call upon Him. He knows what we need before we ask, and He is always waiting and willing to help. Look at yonder sun. It is thousands of years since God made it and hung it up in the sky. Through all those thousands of years, the sun has been shining away as hard as it can. It has never stopped shining for a moment, day or night. And Jesus is just like the sun in this respect. The sun is all the time giving light, and Jesus is all the time governing and ruling, giving grace and help and blessing to His people. Wherever we are, and wherever we go, He is always there beforehand, ready to take care of us and do us good.

The Bible is full of illustrations of the way in which this Kingdom is ruling all things, at all times, and in all places. It was this which kept Noah safe while the world was drowning. It was this which kept Lot safe while the storm of fire was burning up Sodom and Gomorrah. It was this which kept Joseph safe, although his brethren had made up their minds to kill him. It was this which kept Moses safe in Egypt, though Pharaoh was very angry with him, and would have killed him if he could. It was this which kept David safe, though Saul was hunting him with three thousand men, all up and down the land, and tried for years to destroy him. It was this which kept Daniel safe in the den of lions, and his three friends when Nebuchadnezzar threw them into the burning, fiery furnace. And when Jonah was carried by the whale down to the lowest depths of the ocean, it was this "Kingdom ruling over all" which preserved him there, and brought him safe back to land, and to his home again.

And in just the same way, this Kingdom, as it rules over all things, is preserving people now. Here is an illustration.

Some time ago a clergyman from Newhaven was on a visit to Boston during the winter. He was stopping at the Marlborough Hotel, and was sitting in his room writing a lecture that he was going to deliver. A very severe gale was blowing that day. He stopped in his writing, being at a loss for a word. He clasped his hands over his head, and tilted his chair back, while hesitating about the word he wished to make use of. Just while he was doing this, the storm blew down a chimney, and a great mass of bricks and mortar came tearing through the roof and the ceiling, and crushed the table on which he had been writing. If he had not leaned back on his chair at that very moment, he would have been killed instantly. The hole made in the roof was from ten to fourteen feet in width. What was it which led this minister to lean back at that very moment, and so to save his life? It was not an accident or chance that happened to him. In a world where God is always present everywhere, there can be no such thing as accident or chance. Nothing merely happens. Everything is known and ordered or allowed. Jesus, Whose "Kingdom ruleth over all," was in the room with that minister. Perhaps it was one of His Angels who led him to tip back his chair and thus to save his life.

And when we think of Jesus as ruling all the greatest things and all the smallest things, in all places, and at all times, then it may well be said that we are "seeing the King" in the beauty of His Kingdom.

If we have Jesus for our Friend, it will always be a help and comfort to us to think how "His Kingdom ruleth over all!"—*Rev. Dr Newton.*

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

The Collect

O LORD, we beseech Thee to keep Thy Church and household continually in Thy true religion; that they who do lean only upon the hope of Thy Heavenly grace may evermore be defended by Thy mighty power; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Collect appointed for to-day is borrowed from the Sacramentary of Gregory (A.D. 590). A writer observes—"In the Sarum Missal, the Sundays after the Epiphany were reckoned from the octave after Epiphany; so that no *propria* (or proper services) had been required for more than *five* Sundays. In reckoning them more simply in 1549 from the Epiphany itself (omitting the 'Sunday within the octave,' or the 'octave Sunday,' whichever it might be), some provision was needed for a Sixth Sunday; which, as being seldom required, was supplied by a Rubric:—*The VIth Sunday (if there be so many) shall have the same Psalm* [*Introit,*] *Collect, Epistle, and Gospel that were upon the Fifth Sunday.*" It will be seen from this remark, that in A.D. 1549 the Collect, Epistle, and Gospel appointed for the Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany were directed to be used (if required) on the *Sixth* Sunday also. This arrangement was in force up to A.D. 1661, the date of the Savoy conference.

Hope

"*We are saved by hope.*"—*Rom. viii.* 24.

What is hope? It is hard to put the meaning in words. An old writer speaks of hope under a figure in something like the following: Hope is a virgin of a fair and clear countenance. Her proper dwelling-place is on earth, but her proper object is in Heaven (by which he means that though hope is always to be found on earth, and not in Heaven, where there is no need of hope, yet her thoughts and desires are always fixed on Heaven). She is of a quick and piercing eye that can see the glory of God, the mercy of Christ, the society of saints and Angels, the joys of Paradise, through all the clouds between us and Heaven, even as Stephen saw Heaven opened, and Jesus standing in the holy place. Her eye is so fixed on the blessedness above, that nothing in the world can turn it away. If this is anything like a picture of hope, well may the Apostle say, "We are saved by *hope*," and well may every one of us desire to have such a delightful guest dwelling within our hearts.

But as far as I remember, the old writer goes on with his description, by telling some of the attendants of hope: *Faith* is her attorney-general; *Prayer* her solicitor; *Patience* her physician; *Charity* her almoner; *Thankfulness* her treasurer; *Confidence* her vice-admiral; *The promise of God* her anchor; *Peace* her chair of state; and *Eternal Glory* her crown.

What a wonderful array of officers to be sure! But every one of them does attend hope, ay, and a good many more besides. To show you that it is so I will put matters in the form of a parable: Once upon a time a strong band, depending on the word of the Great King, set out for a distant land, which they were assured would repay them for any difficulty in getting there. One of the band was named *Industry*, and it was his place to cut down trees, lead the way in crossing rivers, climbing mountains, and clearing obstacles out of the road. I fancy, however, he would have found the work too much for him, if he had not had *Patience* continually by his side, who tired not the livelong day, but was always ready to take his share of every work and every burden. Then there was *Perseverance* also, who, whenever there was the least inclination to lag, shot on ahead, as an inducement for the rest to follow after. And many more there were, such as *Zeal* and *Self-denial*, all ready to lend their aid in getting to the land their hearts were set on reaching. Above all, these brave fellows took with them their sweet sister *Hope*, without whom, I fear, all their united efforts would have been in vain.

But how could she help? I will tell you. The labour which this worthy band had to undergo was incessant. They were continually marching, climbing, chopping, perspiring. But all the day, and especially when Industry was feeling disheartened by never-ending work, or Patience was wiping the sweat from his brow, or even Perseverance was beginning to tire, or Self-denial to feel that the task was too great for him, Hope would chime in with a sweet song set to the sweetest music, "God will bless us, God, even our own God, will give us His blessing." And they could not resist that song. They were ashamed to give in, or be discouraged. The singing of Hope was, as it were, silver chains or golden fetters to bind them to their labour, causing them at all times, morning, noon and night, to think of the blessed land which they would reach by and by. Thus Hope saved them from perishing in despair, by the continual singing of her sweet song, "God will bless us, God, even our own God, will give us His blessing."

And, indeed, what should we do without hope? Who could learn, or labour, or even live without hope? Why is it you try to learn your letters when at school? Is it not in the hope of being able to read by and by? Why do you learn to write and cipher? Is it not in the hope of being able to keep your accounts when you grow up? Would the sailor go to sea, or the merchant trade if they did not hope for safety and success? Would the soldier fight but for the hope of victory? Would the husbandman plough, harrow, and sow, if he did not also hope to reap?

It is just so in matters relating to the soul, and that is what the old writer meant when he talked of Faith being Hope's attorney-general, Prayer her solicitor, and so on. Why do we pray? In the hope of prevailing with God. Why do we believe? In the hope of pleasing God. Why do we obey? In the hope of being loved by God. Without hope we should do none of these things. It is a sad thing when hope forsakes man or child. The boy who, at his lessons, has no hope of mastering them, is not at all likely to master them; the man who labours without hope is almost sure to fail. Be careful how you allow hope to flee from you, though, thank God children are slow to do that. It is a pity that, as they become men and women, they do not cherish hope so closely as they did in their more youthful days.

Why is it that grown-up people have not so bright a hope as young people? As I am speaking to young people, perhaps I ought not to expect an answer. I will tell you why it is. It is because, in times past, they have met with so many disappointments. When young they had many hopes. But the hopes of most people are too often like soap-bubbles which children blow; they are

beautifully shaped and beautifully coloured, and they mount upwards and upwards in the air, as though they would last long, and reach the sky. Alas! all at once they come against something, or something against them, or the wind is too rough, or some other cause interferes, and they are burst. Now where is the use of hope spent on such things as these? No hope whatever can save them.

I wonder if any of you have ever read "Don Quixote." He was a character whose hopes were much of this kind. They had no *reality* about them. He was for ever going about seeking to be thought a valiant soldier. With this hope he put on armour. But of what sort? What do you think his helmet was? Why, pasteboard, which being struck with a sword, he sewed it up again and wore it all the same. So also he attacked a windmill, in the hope that he was taking a castle; and charged a flock of sheep, in the hope that he was routing an army! You smile and say, How foolish! But, dear children, we are quite as foolish if we do not look into the nature of our hopes, in order to be sure that they are *real* and not *misleading*.

Thus you will see that there are two kinds of hope; hope that can be disappointed, and hope that cannot be disappointed. I do not say that you must never cherish hope that can be disappointed, because that hope may concern others. We may hope, for instance, that some poor drunkard may reform and become a sober man. It is quite right to hope it, though the hope is liable to disappointment. We may hope that some dear friend who is ill may get well and not die. It is quite right to hope it, though perhaps the hope may fail.

But when I speak of hope that can, and hope that cannot, be disappointed, I am thinking of the hopes which anyone may have concerning himself. Let us go through a few: You may hope for money. Well, who knows? you may get much or none. If none, you are disappointed; if much, perhaps, after all, it will be about as useless to you as Don Quixote's pasteboard helmet. Suppose in the getting of it you place your soul in danger, do you hope the money will save you? If so, you will be disappointed. An Arab lost his way in the desert. He wandered about for two days without finding anything to eat, and was now in danger of dying of hunger. At length he saw one of those welcome pools where travellers water their camels. He hastened to it as fast as his tired limbs could carry him, but, on reaching it, found it quite dried up. Just then he spied a large bag lying on the sand. He was glad to hope that it, perhaps, contained food and water also. With great difficulty he managed to crawl to it, and began to feel it with his hands to find out what it was. He felt that it was filled with little round things, and began to hope that they were dates or nuts. On opening the bag he found that they were pearls, things precious enough in the city, but worthless and good for nothing to a starving man in the desert. The poor disappointed Arab fell fainting on the sand, and perished of hunger. Riches did not save him.

In the same way you may hope for pleasure, or fine dress, or greatness, or popularity, or even learning, and you may or may not get them. If not, you are disappointed; and if you do, expecting them to do that which they cannot do, namely, give you the satisfaction which only God can give, and the salvation which comes alone from Christ, why, then, your hope will still he disappointed. It is not such hope as that which St Paul in the text says men are saved by.

The great thing, then, about the hopes we cherish is that they shall be such as cannot be disappointed. It is well for everybody, even for children like you, to find out all you can about such hopes. To do so you must inquire what is likely to disappoint your hopes. You hope to be rich for instance:

Now what may disappoint that hope? Poverty. You hope to be always in good health: What may disappoint you? Sickness. You hope to be always cheered and loved by your friends: What may disappoint you? Their death, or they may desert you. You hope for a great many other things, which you can think of as well as, or better than I can; but for every such hope, most likely there is something capable of disappointing it. What is it then, that we are in search of? It is a hope which poverty cannot disappoint, nor affliction, nor distress, nor danger, nor the death of our friends, nor anything else that we can think of, not even our own death. Is there such a hope? and what is it if there is? For, depend upon it, if we can discover it, that is just the hope by which we are saved.

There is but *one* hope that I know of which, if properly received and decidedly held, is liable to no disappointment. The hope I am thinking of is the hope *which the righteous have of seeing Christ at the last.* It is only the righteous who can cherish this hope. How can a wicked man, or woman, or child have such a hope? A person who cheats, or lies, or steals, a person who neglects God's Word, who never prays, who is disobedient to God's commands, a person who hates his fellow-creatures and never seeks to do them good, cannot possibly hope to see Christ. Why, such a person does not really *desire* to see Him; how, then, can he have any *hope* in the matter?

What a loss the want of such a hope is! It is a support in all difficulties, an anchor in all storms. Oh! my children, you may be poor, but if you have this hope, you are richer than the richest monarch on earth without it; you may be sick, but you will not be unhappy; you may lose your friends by death or otherwise, but you will still have one Friend better than all standing by you, cheering your hope with the certain promise that it shall *never, never* be disappointed.

May your whole life long be blessed with this hope! May it, like the star which led the wise men to Bethlehem, be a life-star to guide you in your course through this world, and never disappear from your view until it has actually brought you into the full presence of Christ our Saviour!

—Rev. G. Litting, M.A., L.L.B.

Hope

"*Hope thou in God.*"—*Ps. xlii.* 5.

These words are taken from a Psalm, or hymn, composed specially for the choir of Jerusalem Cathedral; or, as we should more properly say, the Temple at Jerusalem; for although David was not allowed to build it, he was permitted to arrange its choir and compose some of its hymns. A cathedral is the principal church of the diocese (a diocese is a certain part of the country ruled over by a bishop), and the cathedral choir is generally the best trained of all the church choirs in the diocese. It was so with the Jews also. They had their synagogues, or parish churches; and the Temple at Jerusalem was the chief synagogue of the nation.

Perhaps I shall surprise you when I tell you something about the musical services of the Temple; and, most probably, if those who object to a musical service in church, knew what I am going to tell you about the Temple choir, they would come to see that if God accepted "loud praises" and "much music" in the old days, it is not only not wrong, but quite right, to praise Him with "instruments of music," "with trumpets also, and with shawms," and with much singing, now, to-day.

We generally have an organ to accompany the service in our churches; but the Jews had a very numerous band and a splendid choral service.

There were one hundred and sixty-six musicians in this band, which played at the ordinary services. But there were twenty-four of these bands; and on great days they all played together, so that sometimes there were nearly four thousand players upon viols and harps, flutes and horns, timbrels and cymbals! All these people were well-trained musicians, who spent much of their time in practising their parts, so as to make God's "praise to be glorious." Then it seems that the Temple choir numbered multitudes of men and women. The service was well known too; and the whole body of singers were led either by Asaph, Jeduthun, or by Heman, the three leaders, or presentors. It must have been a very wonderful sight to see four thousand players and multitudes of trained singers taking part in the service on the festival days of the Jewish Church!

Perhaps you would like to ask what hymn-book they used. Their hymn-book we call the Psalter, the book (or, more properly speaking, the five books) of Psalms; and just in the same way that we now sometimes sing hymns of sorrow for sin, such as "Lord, in this Thy mercy's day"; or again, of joy and thanksgiving, as "All people that on earth do dwell"; or one teaching us to put our "whole trust" in God, such as:

"O God! our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,"

so did the Temple choir. Their praises rang out far and wide over the hills which "stand about Jerusalem," making the little valleys beneath echo with sweet notes of joy and gladness. Or again, the band played very softly, and the singers sang a mournful song of tears and woe, asking for mercy and forgiveness; while at another time they would sing a Psalm, speaking of hope and trust in God, such as the Forty-second, which says: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance."

This Forty-second Psalm was most probably written by David and sent to the "precentor" (as you will see if you look at the title of it, which you will only find in the Bible version), that he might teach the choir to sing it. He had experienced a great deal of joy, a great deal of fear and sadness also, in the course of his life. One of his greatest trials came upon him when his favourite son Absalom persuaded some of the people to turn against King David, causing him to leave his house and go out of the city to fight against his own rebellious subjects. He had often said, "Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thine house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth"; but now he was driven from Jerusalem, and prevented from worshipping in "the house of the Lord." Yet, although so sad and so cast down in spirit, he said to his soul, "Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance." And this was the lesson David wished his people to learn also when he sent this Psalm to the leader of the choir, that when sorrow or affliction came upon them, as it had upon him, they would find comfort and strength by hoping in God.

Now we often hear people taking about Faith and Charity, but seldom about Hope; and yet if you look at the emblems of Faith, Hope and Charity, you will see that the cross represents Faith, the heart, Charity (or love), and the anchor, Hope. Why, then, is Hope represented by an anchor? Well, let us ask, what is an anchor used for? The captain orders the anchor to be dropped when he wishes his vessel to stay where it is; the anchor is dropped to keep the ship steady in a storm; to prevent her

from being driven ashore, or upon the rocks and sand-banks. An anchor is therefore as necessary for the safety of a ship as is the compass.

Yes: and if you were to take the emblems of Faith, Hope and Charity, and blot, or paint out, the anchor, you would feel at once that something was gone, which made the other two look very strange. So, when we hear of Faith and Charity so much, we cannot help wondering how people get on without Hope.

We have all of us read what Hope did for Mr H. M. Stanley, the brave and persevering, because hopeful, African explorer. For months he and his followers were making their way through a vast African forest, so thick and dense that the light of day looked like the gloom of twilight; so unhealthy, too, was it, that many suffered and died, while so scarce was food with them, that several times it seemed as though they would all perish of hunger. Many of the tribes they met with were unfriendly towards them, and treated them in the most cruel manner, even killing some of them with their poisoned arrows! Mr Stanley had set out with the hope of rescuing Emin Pasha; and this it was which enabled him to keep up his spirits, to cheer on, day after day, his followers, until he succeeded in achieving his object.

If a boy or girl is downcast and sad, the best possible medicine to take is Hope. Hope sweetens the bitterness of present sadness. David's heart was ready to break with very great grief; but all his sadness faded away when Hope, with her bright face and sweet, gentle smile, came to him. As a great Italian preacher says: "In all the serenity of her beauty, with her fair, glad eyes, and never-fading youth, Hope is indeed the immortal child of Heaven."

A man without Hope would be like the world without the sun; and you know that if the world were to lose the sun, all of us would die very likely within the space of a month. Yes, Hope is as necessary to us as the sun himself, for without it we should never do anything worth the doing, and our life would become a burden to us.

It is indeed, fortunate for us that, as the poet sings, "Hope springs eternal in the human breast." The sailor would not go to sea unless he hoped to reach the port in safety, and to return to his native land. The farmer would not trouble himself to prepare his land, and work hard during the ploughing and sowing seasons, unless he hoped for harvest-time to bring him a good crop. The general would not take his men into battle, unless he hoped to win the victory.

You remember the story of Christopher Columbus. He was the discoverer of America—for although it is said that America was really discovered centuries before he was born, no one seemed to know anything of its existence in Columbus's day—called the New World. He was strongly of opinion that land was to be found beyond the great Atlantic Ocean, but when he told his belief to his friends, they only laughed at him. He asked his fellow-countrymen to help him in the effort to fit up some ships, that he might go in search of the New World, but they refused to think of such a thing. Christopher Columbus, then, full of the hope of finding help from the English, came over here; and, it is said, to our shame, was promised assistance, but never received it. He then travelled to Portugal, and told the King of Portugal of his desire to go on a voyage of discovery, and of his hopes of finding a country unknown before to Europeans. Alas! poor man, he was listened to, but sent away again without being any nearer to success. You will, no doubt, wonder that he had sufficient perseverence left to ask anyone else, after all his disappointments, but Hope urged him

on, and Hope guided his footsteps this time to the Court of Isabella, Queen of Spain, where, after waiting for six years, he at last received three small vessels, with which he set out on his errand. He had more trouble, however, to contend with yet, for his sailors and officers mutinied, and seizing him, bound him hand and foot, and threatened to throw him overboard unless he would consent to return to Spain. No; so strong was his hope of discovering the unknown world, that he still declined to return; and just as everything looked as if he must fail, and perhaps lose his life, he saw a great quantity of seaweed floating on the water. "Let us try for three days longer," cried he, "and then, if land does not appear in sight, you may kill me if you like. We cannot be far from land now, for seaweed does not grow upon the waves, nor yet in mid ocean." His men agreed to this; and, as you know, within three days they found land.

Hope, then, can do wonderful things, but even greater things than these can they do who "hope in God." Men may be encouraged by Hope for a long time, and face many difficulties, and then at last give way to despair; but he who puts his "hope in God" will never fail, nor give way to despair. "Hope in God" cannot do away with trials and vexations, but it can and does carry us through them, and makes us able to bear them. "Hope in God" is a soft, gentle light sent us from Heaven to cheer and brighten our way through life. The silvery light of the moon does not drive away the darkness of the night; but it gives us sufficient light to keep us from losing our way, and although hope does not rid us of fear, trial, and sadness, it does take from them much of their weight, and helps us to look upward and to pass onward in our journey through life.

"For hope shall brighten days to come,
And memory gild the past."

"Hope thou in God," both for this life, and for the life that is to come.

When you cannot quite see your way through a difficulty, "Hope thou in God." When you are very much troubled in heart or mind, "Hope thou in God." When you just miss that upon which your thoughts have been employed a long time, something you have long wished for, then "Hope thou in God."

Neither you nor I, dear boys and girls, can ever suffer as David did when he uttered these words; and, moreover, we have much more reason to hope in God than he had, because we know Him better. We know more of His love and care for us than David did, because our Lord, the Son of God has visited the world since David's day, and told us much more about God the Father than the world ever knew before.

Christopher Columbus persevered in his efforts to find America, because Hope held him up and kept him steadfast. You and I, also, seek a New World as he did. If Columbus had been thrown overboard he would never have seen America; his hope would have perished with him. It is not so with us and our hope: it does not die with death. The world says: "Dum spiro, spero," that is, "While I breathe, I hope"; but those who "Hope in God" can go further, and say: "Dum expiro, spero"—"While I die, I hope." Yes; God has prepared such good things as pass man's understanding for those who love Him. But—

"What the future bliss, He gives thee not to know,
But gives thee hope to be thy blessing now."

Happy shall you and I be, dear children, if, in our last hour, we can

truthfully exclaim—"Thou, O God, art the thing that I long for; Thou art my hope, even from my youth."—*Rev. John Bruster.*

Head Faith and Heart Faith

"By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."—Eph. ii. 8.

The word "grace" as here used means God's love and kindness in saving us. Our salvation is His doing; for, unless He had given His Son to die, nothing *we* could do would have been of any use. But it is "through faith," that is, "believing in Jesus," that we have that salvation. You know what it is to believe in an earthly friend—for example, in your parents, in a guide on a dangerous mountain, in your teacher. We must believe in Jesus still more; believe His word, trust Him to fulfil His promises and to save us. It is not trusting Him if we choose our own way, and try to get to Heaven without going through the strait gate and walking along the narrow way.

There are two kinds of believing mentioned in the Bible:

I. Head Faith.—"The devils believe" (Jas. ii. 19). Why do they? because they *know*. They know God is the Creator of all; they know that Jesus came to earth to save man. They believe, but do not love. "They tremble"; they fear and hate God. Many people have this head faith. They say in church, "I believe in God, etc., but do not love Him, nor wish to please Him. This will not save them any more than the devils' belief saves them.

II. Heart Faith.—(Rom. x. 9). "Believe in thy heart." Saving faith is always mixed with love. If there is no love it is not heart faith, and will do us no good. Heart faith shows itself by fruits. If we love we wish to please. And so, if we believe and love God, we shall try to please Him in our conduct, and bring forth the fruits of the Spirit.

It is by grace we are saved, but through faith—that is, Jesus saves us by redemption, but we obtain the gift by faith. We have an illustration of this in the people stepping into the troubled water. It was God's power that made the water cure them. If they had stepped in when it was not troubled, they would have gained nothing. Still, though the water was troubled, unless they stepped in they were not cured. The poor man whom Jesus healed had lain by the side many years, but because he had not stepped in he was not healed. That stepping in is like our faith; God's cure is ready, and if we will believe we may have it. Like the poor man, we have no strength to take even that one step. Faith is the gift of God. We must go to Him for it; He will make us believe if we ask Him. "Ask, and ye shall have."

Why does God insist on faith in those He saves? Because *faith unites us to Christ*. When we believe in Him we are made one with Him. Then God looks at us in Him. He sees not our rags, but His righteousness. Christ's death counts for us, so does His righteousness. If we are not one with Him, each does not count for us. Faith is what unites us to Him, like a rope thrown to a drowning man and held by his deliverer. As long as the former keeps hold of it he is safe, for it unites him to the man who has power to save him; but, if he loses his hold, he is lost.

Have you this faith? Do you love Jesus, and try daily to please Him? Do you trust Him for everything, and go to Him with every need? Are you showing the fruit of faith—giving up your own way to walk in His way, obeying Him, following Him, praying to Him, doing His will? If not, come to Him at once and ask Him to give you this great gift.

The Little Flock Encouraged

"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom."—St Luke xii. 32.

If you were asked what commandment in the Bible comes the most often, do you think you should know? Shall I tell you which commandment God gives most frequently? "Fear not." He says this more than eighty times—I believe eighty-four times; this is much oftener than any other commandment. "Fear not."

You know if we are afraid, it looks as if we did not trust God. If anybody is afraid in the dark—if anybody is afraid of thunder—if anybody is afraid of going to bed alone—if anybody is afraid of robbers—if anybody is afraid of wild beasts—if anybody is afraid that God will not forgive him (when he asks Him)—if anybody is afraid that God will not guide him all along till he gets to Heaven—then he does not trust God.

Suppose you were told to take care of a little child, should you like that little child to cry, and say, "I am afraid"? You would feel yourself affronted if that child did not trust you. If anybody were leaning on your arm for support, would you not like it? I think you would—I should; I do like it, and I think you all like to lean upon someone's arm. God likes you to lean upon His arm. God does not like it, when He is taking care of us, for us to say, "We are afraid." It pleases God when you trust Him—when you think what a good God He is—what a kind God He is. I do not wonder that the Lord is displeased if we are afraid, when He says "Fear not," eighty-four times.

Then, I wonder to whom God says it? There are some people whom I shall call "Don't-care-people." I know some boys, and girls too, who look as if they said, "I don't care; I am not afraid of anybody or anything." But I think that this spirit—that this kind of boy or girl—displeases God more than anything else. It is like Cain, when he killed his brother Abel. It is like Joseph's cruel brethren, who put poor little Joseph down in the pit, and did not seem to care for anybody or anything. I hope none of you are these "don't-care people" as to what God says.

You see, if God's children did not sometimes "fear," God would not say, "Fear not"—to show that they do "fear." I tell you what you are to "fear"—"fear" to grieve God. In other respects, God says, "Fear not." Now we must look to see to whom it is that God says, "Fear not." It is called—what? "Little Flock." Now, will you think with me what is meant by "a little flock"?

There was somebody who once asked before us, "Who are the little flock?" and "where are they?" Turn to the first chapter of Solomon's Song, and look at the seventh and eighth verses, and you will find something said about this "little flock." Somebody says—"Tell me, O Thou Whom my soul loveth (that is Christ), where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of Thy companions? If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents." If you want to know where the "little flocks" are, I will tell you where you must go—you must watch where the "footsteps" are to be found of all those good saints who lived before you, and you will find them all by the "shepherds' tents."

I hope you are a little "kid" by the "shepherd's tent." I believe the

"shepherds" mean God's ministers, and the "shepherds' tents" mean baptism, and the Lord's Supper, and praying, and all the ordinances of God. The "little flocks" love these things, and are to be found in "shepherds' tents"—in God's ministry, and loving holy things, and going in "the footsteps" where all the "flocks" went before them. So that this "little flock" —those who walk in "the footsteps," after having forsaken the world and all bad things, and walk with good saints, are like "kids by the shepherds' tents." That is the "little flock."

Now, why is it called "little"? A "little flock." Perhaps it is because there are so few in it—there are very few.

If you turn to Jeremiah, you will see how God makes a "little flock"—you will not wonder it is "little" when you read that. Jeremiah iii. 14—"I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion." So you see there are only to be "two" or "three." Nobody naturally tries to love God; and if nobody seeks to love God, or to care about his soul, he must not wonder at "the flock" being so "little."

Do you not think the reason is, not only because so few love God, but because there are so many "little" lambs in it? there are so many children in it. Turn to Isaiah xl. 11—"He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with His arms, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." So, you see, that here are three or four things spoken of, and everything about "little lambs." There are some "little lambs" in His fold, if there is nothing else.

I should like to tell you here a thing you do not perhaps quite know. You remember the Twenty-third Psalm—"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul." That is what I want you to look at —"He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul." Now I never understood that, till a Jew explained it; and I should like you to know how the Jew explained it to me.

He said, in the land of Palestine—the Holy Land—they generally put the lambs in the fields in the evening, by the side of the River Jordan. There are beautiful fields by the River Jordan; and so the shepherd, as the night is coming on, puts them in these fields to lie down by "the green pastures." And sometimes it happens in the night, that the snow melts on the top of Mount Lebanon, and runs down the banks of the river, and makes it swell and rise, and overflow its banks, and the little lambs are caught up by the water, and carried down, down, down, miles and miles down the river; and when the sun rises in the morning, you may see a shepherd going down the river with his crook, after the poor little lambs that are struggling in the water, and he will hook up the little lambs, and bring them back again to the field—and the Jew said that is what it means, "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He restoreth my soul." Sometimes little girls and boys think they are quite safe—they are beside "still waters" and "green pastures" —and presently something carries them away, away; and what would become of them, if somebody did not bring them back again?

One thing more. Do you not think they are called "a little flock" because everybody in that "flock" thinks so "little" of himself? Everybody who is a Christain thinks very "little" of himself, or ought to do so. If anybody thinks much of himself, he is by no means a Christian. Did you ever wonder what "Paul" meant? You know Paul's name was Saul; and why was he called Paul? There are different reasons why he was called Paul, but I will tell you one—because Paul means "little." Saul felt himself to be such a great sinner, that he left off loving the world, and lived and worked for God,

and then they called him Paul—"the little one." Yet what a great man he was! still he felt himself "a little one"—"the least of all the Apostles"; "the little one." All good Christians should think themselves so. You know, very often, that almost all Christians are despised by men of the world.

There was a very poor, quaint, old man, and I will tell you what happened to him in Scotland. They called him poor Joe, and he used to go muttering to himself about the streets. In the winter, once he was very cold, and a very kind farmer told him he might come in and warm himself by his fire, and then have a bed in his loft. And when he sat by the fire, he kept muttering, "Thank the Lord! Thank the Lord!" I dare say the world used to laugh at that poor Joe very much, yet how good a man? So you see these are the reasons why it is called "a little flock"—because there are so "few" of them—because there are so many "little" lambs—and because they think so "little" of themselves. So it is a "little flock."

"It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom." What a good God must that great God be in Heaven, Who made the sky and stars, and Who sits upon that beautiful Throne in glory, and gives to such poor creatures as we are "the Kingdom!"

There was once a great Roman emperor going through Rome in grand triumph, surrounded by all his attendants—his courtiers and his soldiers; he himself was riding in a chariot, accompanied by sounds of trumpets—oh! so grand! The emperor was in the midst of that great procession, when a little child came out of the crowd, and ran up to this great man, and of course he was put back—they cried out, "Go back, little child—go back—go back!—He is your emperor!" And the little child said, "Yes, he is your emperor, but he is my father." Oh! how beautiful it is to say of the Lord, "He is my Father!" "Your Father!"

How did He become your Father? If you look to Jeremiah again, you will see. Jeremiah iii. 19—"But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? and I said, Thou shalt call me, My Father: and shalt not turn away from Me."

Will you attend to me, while I say something important? God has one Child; that is, Jesus. Nobody can be God's child who is not joined to Jesus—a member of Jesus—united to Jesus. Then you become indeed God's child. When we are joined to Jesus, then He is our Father in a sweeter sense. So that if you wish to be able to say, "Our Father, Which art in Heaven"—you must love Jesus—follow Jesus—be like Jesus, and be united to Jesus. And oh! what a pleasant thing to have God's eye upon you.

Now I want you to look at the next thing. We should always shake the bough well; some fruit is generally to be had from every little branch, it only wants well shaking. My dear children, I want to correct two mistakes some of you make.

One is, I believe some of you think—at least you seem to think—that God is not anxious to save you—that it will be hard work to please God—to make Him willing to save you. God is more willing to save you than you are to be saved. Do not think that God is reluctant and unwilling to save you. No, no! "It is your Father's good pleasure." Look at that beautiful verse in St Matthew; it is the only time when it is said Jesus was happy when He was upon the earth—Matt. vi. 25—let us all read it, "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." So you see it made Jesus happy, and God happy. He rejoiced in His "good pleasure."

Now I wish to point out another mistake, a great mistake—you think that Jesus is very kind, but God is not quite so kind as Jesus Christ. You think that Jesus is a very kind Being, Who has come in to prevent God from being angry with us: you think that God is angry with us, unreconciled, and Jesus Christ comes in to make God kind. That is the greatest mistake in the world. God the Father is just as kind as Jesus Christ. Never think of God the Father, only as being as kind as Jesus Christ.

What says John (chap. iii. 16), "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Never think of God as an unreconciled God, and of Christ as reconciling Him. He is reconciled to us all. It is we who want to be reconciled; not God. "It is your Father's good pleasure." Now we must look at the last thing. What is He going to "give" us? Do you know? He will "give us the Kingdom." Then I suppose He gives us everything—the greater and the less.

Can you say that? If you can indeed say, "Christ is mine," you have more than a nobleman's estate. "Ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom" at last, and be sure He will take care of your wants now.

There was once a poor man toiling up a hill with a pack on his back, and a gentleman riding up in his carriage said to him, "Come, and sit in the carriage, and I will take you up the hill." This poor man rode up the hill, but he did not take the pack off his back; so the gentleman said, "If I carry you, I think you need not carry your pack." Therefore remember that if God carries you, He will carry all your burdens—you need not carry them. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom."

What is "the Kingdom"? Let me say a word or two about that. Remember, "the Kingdom of Heaven" must come to us before we go to that. He that has ever gone to the Kingdom of Heaven when he died, has had the Kingdom of Heaven come to him while he lived. In Romans xiv. 17, it is said, "For the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Thus we have "the Kingdom of Heaven" in our hearts when we have "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." If we have that, then we have good hope, and when we die we shall go to Heaven. Do you know you are all trained to be "kings"? I wonder how the Prince of Wales is trained? I should think he must always be thinking, "Oh, I am going to be a king." And that is what you ought to be thinking. You should say, "I am going to be a king." Yes, every child, who is a Christian, is going to be a "king." "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom."

You have heard of Charlemagne—he ordered that when he died, there should be a chapel built just like the chapel of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem; and that he should not be buried like other men, but like a king, and so he said, "Do not lay my body down, but set me upon a throne, and bury me like a king." He was to have a room set apart for him at the side of the chapel, and there was to be a Bible opened and laid by his side when he was dead, and the sword of Charlemagne was to be laid on the other side—and upon his head a crown of gold, and a robe over his shoulders. So he was buried. Years afterwards, the emperor Otho went to see how Charlemagne looked; the chapel was opened, and he went in to see him—and what did he see? He was crumbled up into dust. There was the cowl; the crown was not destroyed, but was saved. There was Charlemagne, one of the greatest kings that ever lived—there he was, all dust.

Now I will tell you of another man. There was a poor miserable-looking old man, who lived in an almshouse—I will not say where—and the poor old creature had the palsy, and he was sitting in his chair when a gentleman went to see him, and said, "Well, my friend, how do you do?" "Oh, I am waiting—waiting!" "Are you waiting for me?" "No, I am waiting for my Master; for Him to bring me my crown." "Bring you your crown!" "Yes, I am going to be a king." "How do you know that?" "Because Christ has said it—'Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.'"—*Rev. J. Vaughan, M.A.*

Anecdotes and Illustrations

Saint Columba.—When Columba felt that his departure was at hand, he desired to visit the corn-fields, and say farewell to the brothers at work amidst the green ears. Too infirm to walk, he was drawn in a cart by oxen. Reaching the workers he said, "I much wished to fall asleep on Easter Day; but then I was fain to wait a little longer, that the glad festival might not be changed into a day of gloom for you." Then among the springing wheat the labourers wept bitterly, for they knew that they should see the beloved familiar face no more; but with tender, hopeful words, he comforted them; and, turning towards the east, he blessed the island and all its people. On the following Saturday, supported by his faithful friend Diarmid, he proceeded to bless the granary belonging to the community. Seeing two large heaps of corn piled up, he exclaimed, "I rejoice to know that, when I leave them, my children will not suffer from want. To-day is Saturday, which in Holy Writ is called Sabbath, or rest. And truly to me it is Sabbath, for it is the last day of my mortal life. On this very night I shall go the way of my fathers. It is my Lord Jesus Who deigns to invite me; and it is He Who has made known that my summons will come to-night." After this he returned to his cell, and occupied himself in his favourite work of transcribing the Psalms. On coming to the Thirty-fourth Psalm, ninth verse, "They who fear the Lord shall want no manner of thing that is good," he laid aside his pen for the last time. The saint then repaired to the church for vespers. Returning to his cell, he lay for some time on his bed with its stone pillow, and proceeded to give his final directions, that Diarmid might communicate them to his disciples: "Dear children, these are my last words. Live in peace and charity one with another, *and God, who strengthens the good and comforts the just, will grant you all that is needful in this life,* and will also bestow the everlasting joys which are reserved for all who keep this law." Then he lay in silent communing with the Master in Whose service he had spent his life; but in the dim dawn, as the bell rung its first matin chime, with a quick access of the old vigour he arose and entered the church alone. The building, as the awe-stricken brethren approached, seemed filled by a dazzling radiance, which, however, passed away before Diarmid reached the spot. Groping in the darkness, the monk called out with tears, "Where art thou, O my father?" but the kindly voice, once swift to respond, was silent. Prostrate before the altar lay the venerable saint, and Diarmid, placing himself at his side, raised the honoured head upon his knees. The death scene recalls the past vividly, as might a picture of Rembrandt's. Again we see a crowd of weeping monks, holding their rude lanterns aloft; and, grouped round the central figures, all eyes are riveted to the beloved face over which the shadow of death is darkly stealing. Then the heavy eyes are opened, and for one moment they rest on the brethren with an expression of love and serenity, and raising the right hand, Columba makes the sign of blessing. A soft sigh escapes his lips, and the apostle of Caledonia

enters into his rest; closing his career in the year of grace 597, and in the seventy-sixth year of his age.

What Big Ben Said.—Big Ben is the pet name Londoners give to the clock at Westminster. It is the largest public striking clock in the world; its face does not seem very big, though it would more than cover the wide path at the foot of the tower; its chimes are set to these beautiful words:

"All through this hour
Lord be my Guide,
And by Thy power
No foot shall slide."

If you learn the words and hum them to the chime, they will become associated with it, so that when you hear the sound of Big Ben it shall be like a human voice speaking these words. What a blessing it would be if all the boys who listened to the chimes would pray the prayer, "All through this hour Lord be my Guide." Country people think it very difficult to find their way from one place to another in London. There is such a maze of streets and the rush of traffic is bewildering; it is more difficult to keep to the path of duty through one's life than not to miss one's way on the first day in the streets of London. We so easily miss the road and turn to the left when we should have kept straight on.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd Who takes care of all His sheep; no lamb is permitted to fall from His arms. He delights to give power to boys and girls who are seeking to do right things. If we stand in dangerous places, underneath there will be the everlasting arms which will hold us up. As the Psalmist says, "He shall give His Angels charge concerning thee." We are very weak in ourselves, but when the Lord supports us we are more powerful than all the forces of evil. Whatever may be our difficulties, we shall go through them; whatever the crosses we have to carry, we shall not fall beneath them. If our steps were tottering and uncertain, we should be kept. There is a Gospel in the chimes, let it ring in your heart, "And by Thy power no foot shall slide."

Confidence.—A man crossed the Mississippi on the ice, and, fearing it was too thin, began to crawl on his hands and knees in great terror; but when he gained the opposite shore, all worn out, another man drove past him gaily, sitting upon a sled loaded with pig-iron. That is just the way most Christians go up to the Heavenly Canaan, trembling at every step lest the promises shall break under their feet, when really they are secure enough for us to hold our heads and sing with confidence as we march to the better land.

Questions on the Collect

1. What is the meaning of the word Church? 2. What does the Collect for to-day call the Church? 3. Whose household is it? 4. In what do we ask God to keep His church? 5. What does the word "religion" mean *generally*? 6. What does it mean in this Collect? 7. On what does the Collect say we should lean? 8. What does the word grace signify? 9. The General Thanksgiving in our Prayer Book refers to the "means of grace"; what are those means? 10. What do we pray for on behalf of those who lean only on the hope of God's grace? 11. What does "defended" mean?

The Gospel

St Matthew xiii. 24-30.

The Parable of the Tares

"A man sowed good seed in his field."—St Matt. xiii. 24.

I. Introduction.—Recall the story told by Jesus about the fields and what goes on there. He told many such. The people all understood about that kind of work, but Jesus wished them to understand something more—what? A Heavenly meaning. Sometimes people could see the meaning easily; sometimes they had to say, "Now, what does He mean by that?" If they asked Jesus He was always ready to explain.

II. The Story.—Something like the other. About a field and a Sower and the seed he sowed. Once upon a time a man had a nice field which he thought would be suitable for growing a nice crop of wheat. So he had the field ploughed, and he bought some good seed, and went out and sowed the seed himself, and then he had the field harrowed (harrow like a big square rake) to rake the soil over the seeds, and then thought he had done his duty and went home, expecting to have a fine crop of wheat by and by. But someone was watching what the sower did—an angry, jealous man, who hated the owner of the field (enemy), and wanted to "serve him out." So he said, "I will spoil that nice crop of wheat, if I can." And he got up one moonlight night and went to the field and scattered *other* seed over it—not of good wheat seed—oh no; seed of plants that looked a little like wheat, but were only weeds, harmful weeds—tares.

By and by the pretty green spears of growing wheat pierced through the earth, and the spears of the tares also came up, and at first no one noticed the difference. But after a time, when the wheat was ready to bear fruit the difference could be seen; there would be no good corn on the tare plants. And the labourers went to the master and said, "Why, sir, we thought you sowed good wheat seed in your field; now there are lots of tare plants. How could they have come there?" The master knew and replied, "An enemy hath done this." And the servants said, "Shall we go and pull up all the bad weeds?" But the master answered, "No, for perhaps you would pull up some of the good wheat plants at the same time. Let both grow together till the harvest, and when both wheat and tares are cut down, I will have the tares taken out and destroyed, and the wheat carried home to my barns."

III. Some Meanings.—The field Jesus spoke of was like the big world—there was in it a *mixture* of good and bad seed, good and bad plants, wheat and tares. Every child knows there are good people and bad people, good things and bad things in the world—a mixture of good and evil. Now we may know that some people do wrong, but it is not for us to say that anyone is all bad. Only God knows about that. There may be good that we cannot see, but which God sees. God sees and knows the really wicked and all the wicked things that are done. The other day a little girl said, "If God sees all that the naughty people do, why does He not punish them?" Jesus shows us that God is letting all grow together till His harvest time, and the harvest is the end of the world. So He gives them time to grow better if they will. And He is watching over the good and taking care of them always, keeping them safe to the end.

IV. The Mixture of Good and Evil.—What children have chiefly to think of is the mixture of good and evil in *themselves*. Yes, in every one of your hearts there is both—*Good thoughts and evil thoughts*. Kind, loving, dutiful thoughts. Proud, angry, resentful thoughts. Which like good wheat? Which like harmful tares? Which should you encourage to grow? Whichever kind you favour, that is the kind which will grow the faster in your heart—*Good words and evil words*. Thoughts come first, words come after; kind and unkind, gentle and angry, submissive and rebellious words. Good words spring from good thoughts and good feelings; bad words from evil ones—*Good deeds and evil deeds*. Often bad thoughts and feelings show themselves in bad deeds, naughtiness, injuring others or what belongs to them, disobedience, untruth. But then good thoughts and feelings and intentions lead to good actions, acts of kindness, unselfishness, helpfulness, obedience.

I think you would all prefer to grow good wheat rather than harmful tares. And you know that if you want good plants to grow you must sow the proper seeds. *Good thoughts* are like good seeds; *good words* are like good seeds; *good actions* are like the good fruit that good seed bears. If you fill the garden of your life with good things there will be no room for evil things. Ask God to help you choose the good and to avoid the evil.

Danger! Beware!

"While men slept, his enemy came."—St Matt. xiii. 25.

What a striking picture our Lord puts before us in this parable! We see a busy husbandman—a malicious foe—astonished servants—prudent counsels—the time of harvest—the separation of tares from wheat—the burning of the one, and ingathering of the other—these all made a picture full of interest and full of instruction.

The meaning of the parable is explained by the Great Teacher Himself, we may, however, use the picture to shed light upon our own little lives, and to show that in the small world of our own hearts the same thing goes on as is here said to take place in the great world we live in.

Four things happen in most persons lives; they are put before us here. I. Sowing. II. Sleeping. III. Spoiling. IV. Saving. And there is a time for each which we may briefly look at.

I. The Sowing-time.—When, as children, we kneel beside a mother's knee and receive our first lessons of wisdom and truth; when, as scholars, we listen to the faithful words of a loving teacher; when, as hearers of the Gospel, we attend upon the ministry of an earnest clergyman, whenever we receive truth into our minds and let it enter our hearts, then is our sowing-time. Mary's seed-time was the time when she sat at the feet of Jesus; Lydia's when she listened to Paul; and Timothy's when he learned the good old Scriptures from his mother and grandmother. Our seed-time is chiefly the time of youth.

II. The Sleeping-time.—This *must* come to the husbandman, who cannot always be wakeful and watchful over the fields he has sown; but it *need not* and *ought not* to come to us all in our heart-sowing. Yet a time *may* come when the ear is deaf even to a mother's kind words, and the feet turn aside from the path to the school and the sanctuary—when the appetite for good books fails, and even the Bible affords no delight. Joash no longer cherished the good seed when Jehoiada was gone. Felix slept after Paul had scattered the seeds of truth which made the governor tremble. So we grow cold and careless after receiving good seed.

III. The Spoiling-time.—The enemy of the householder did not try to pluck up the good seed, but succeeded in planting evil side by side with the good. Our great adversary knows too well the difficulty and danger of trying to take away any good principle or practice we have cherished from childhood; it is much easier and more effectual to put some evil principle against it to overpower it. There are foxes—little foxes—which spoil the tender grapes, and sins—little sins—which spoil the fairest characters. The love of social intercourse begotten in many a home may lead the young into society which makes them ungodly. Beware of the tares, and pray to have them rooted out.

IV. The Saving-time.—The harvest was the time in the parable when the wheat was saved and the tares destroyed. An end must come to the sowing alike of good and bad seed; but in our heart-culture we need not wait for the harvest and the end of the world. We may now be saved alike from the presence and power of evil by the influence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts; this we may obtain by coming to Jesus and believing in Him. The woman of Samaria found in Christ the Deliverer she needed. Saul, the persecuter, had the evil disposition removed, and a new character imparted when he saw and heard Jesus. And the poor sorcerer at Philippi was rescued when Paul said to the spirit, "I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her."

In conclusion, use well thy *seed*-time. "Let us not *sleep*, as do others." "Beware lest any man *spoil* you." "Look unto Christ, and be ye *saved*."

"For we know that Thou wilt come,
And wilt take Thy people home;
From Thy field wilt purge away
All that doth offend that day;
Give Thine Angels charge at last
In the fire the tares to cast,
But the fruitful ears to store
In Thy garners evermore."

Wheat and Tares

"*His enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat.*"—*St Matt. xiii.* 25.

Parables are used all the world over. Till lately, Coffee Mensah, King of Ashantee, had as his emblem of royalty a gold axe covered with a leopard skin, which signified "courage in the field, backed up with plenty of money." The leopard skin was a sign of courage, and the gold axe of wealth. One year he sent his messengers with the gold axe to Lieutenant-Governor Griffith. That was a "parable" of war, as the newspapers explained it. It meant that he would cut his way through all difficulties to the accomplishment of his end. But he grew afraid of our army, and presented his gold axe and leopard skin to Queen Victoria. That was a "parable" of peace, and the greatest proof he could give of his desire to have our friendship. Parables are popular among learned and unlearned, because they are so interesting, and so well fitted to convey a great deal of instruction in an easily remembered way. Jesus wishes to delight while He teaches, and to give us truth as we are able to take it in. He gently adapts Himself to us. He comes down to us earthly children, who are most interested in earthly things. He teaches us first by the eye. At the bottom of the stair-like ladder between earth and Heaven He takes us by the hand with more than a mother's loving patience, and, on the stepping-stones of earth, leads us up to Heavenly

things. His parables help us to climb to the knees of Truth, that we may rest in her lap. They are a bridge between the known and the unknown, an easy-covered way between the seen and the unseen.

This parable was spoken to those who expected that Christ's Kingdom could be set up at once on the earth, and that no evil persons or things could be mixed up with it. Christ here corrects that mistake. The scene lives and moves before our eyes. A landowner sows his well-tilled field with the very best seed. At dead of night a villain who bears the landowner a grudge comes and sows ever so much tare-seed over and among the wheat. Our tares (also called vetches) are a sort of wild peas, and first-rate food for cattle. Our farmers often sow them with corn, and cut the crop before the corn is ripe, and use the mixture as fodder. But the tares here are darnel or bastard wheat. Travellers tell that they have seen wheat-fields in Palestine spoiled by these tares. Dr Alford says that he was the owner of a field in Leicestershire which was maliciously sown with charlock, and that the tenant obtained heavy damages from the offender. Another writer says that he has known an outgoing Irish tenant, in spite at his ejection, to sow wild oats in the fields which he was leaving.

The tare looks very like wheat till it is ripened. It is said to be a depraved wheat. As the crop grew, the servants saw the tares and told their surprise to their master, for they knew that he had sown only good seed in the field. "An enemy hath done this," was his sad reply. "Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?" the servants asked, quite sure that he would say Yes. But he says, "Nay, lest——" The young wheat and tares were very like each other, and roots and stalks were so intertwined that they would have come away together in the weeder's hand. "Let both grow together until the harvest"; then there will be no danger of mistake or of injuring the wheat. Travellers in our day have seen reapers in Syria carefully gathering the tares out of the wheat lying in the harvest-field and putting them in separate bundles. "I will say to the reapers, Gather together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them." Before putting any wheat into the barn, they are to burn all the tares, and so run no risk of mixing them with the wheat. Gather them into bundles, as men gather rags, or rubbish in a garden, or thorns and weeds in a corner of a field. Bundle them off: any shape does well enough for the burning. "But gather the wheat into my barn." He does not say "in bundles"; he means, of course, in sheaves, with the heads of precious grain all carefully laid in one way, as was done in those days of hand-husbandry, when fields were very small, and nobody was in a great hurry, even in harvest-time. The seed-field is the world, or that part of it in which the visible Church is planted and the seed of the Word sown; for the world is Christ's property, and He only has a right to sow and reap it. The spiteful and cunning enemy is the devil. True Christians are the wheat, and the tares are they who say they are, and seem to be, but are not, Christ's people. The reaping-time is the Day of Judgment; the reapers are the Angels. Christ here warns us that it is not enough to be in the wheat-field on earth, and teaches us patience with the sad mixture of good and bad in this world. You are in a little corner of Christ's great wheat-field, in which His eye detects every tare. In the train of thought here count these four distinct parts: I. The Sowing. II. The Growing. III. The Parting. IV. The Endings.

I. The Sowing.—Two sowers are busy in this world, Christ and His rival, antichrist. All the real good among men is created by Christ's grace, and is a harvest from seeds dropped by Christ's hand; and to God belongs all the glory. And Christ's true disciple is made by His Word: he

is in some sense just the Word. "The good seed are the children of the Kingdom."

A wicked man is a growth from the seed of the devil's lie. The other sower is the knavish foe of God and man, in whom all hateful things meet. Evil is his good; it is his chosen work and joy to spoil and destroy; he has all sorts of meanness and malignity. You see him skulking and shunning the light. Some speak only of evil, not of the devil, leaving out the *d*. But the Bible always teaches that we have a terrible enemy, a real living person, who hates every good thing, and burns with desire to ruin our souls. And he is the author of evil. Man is not the creator or originator of sin; he is a victim, an imitator and follower of the evil one. Strange traces of this truth are found up and down all countries. If you come upon some scene of frightful noise, where torrent or sea madly tears the rocks, it is called the "Devil's Mill," or the "Devil's Bellows," or the "Devil's Cauldron." If you come to some frightful chasm spanned by a rock, it is called the "Devil's Bridge" or the "Devil's Lifts." West of the Lake of Geneva you come to a big steep mountain leaning over a village like a villainous pugilist over his victim. It often sends down avalanches that spread ruin through the valley. It is called Diablerets, that is, Devilries. Even in the names given to frightful places men recognise the destroying rage of Satan. And how active he is, scattering his seed like thistledown over Christ's wheat-field, doing his utmost in hellish hate to spoil Heaven's wheat! And some on earth are called by Christ "the children of the wicked one." They are most closely bound to him, and very like him. In the malignity of man or boy you may find touches of the very spirit of Satan. Alas! it is too plain that some of the children of men are the children of Satan.

II. The Growing.—All the growing in this world, or development, as many now call it, is not progress and improvement. For both tares and wheat grow, each after its kind, the one for the burning, the other for the barn. Both must grow. You cannot lay your hand upon the life of wheat or tares and keep them from growing. So you do grow, and must grow better or worse every day. Your character is ripening like the peach in summer. Tares and wheat are like each other at first and for a while. Both belong to the family or order of grasses, and no wise botanist feels quite sure about the character of half-formed or half-grown grasses. I have seen a bunch of unripe wheat and tares which a friend brought home from Palestine, and you could not tell which was which. Nearly all well-trained children at first seem to be wheat. An ancient traveller, who had travelled through the world, once said, "I saw fine men at Sparta, and fine children everywhere." It is rare to find a child so thoroughly bad that you could reckon him among the tares. You may have seen a picture of a beautiful child, and underneath the words, "What will he become?" The under part of the picture shows an idler, a drunkard, and a wretched old beggar, while the upper part shows a studious youth, a prosperous young man, and an honoured patriarch. The tares above and the wheat below looked the very same at first. If ever a man was utterly a "child of the wicked one," it was the Emperor Nero. But he was a sweet-tempered, promising boy; and when he was a helpless outcast and the scorn of mankind, his old nurse still loved him, remembering his gentle boyhood, and ministered unto him. All grasses are more or less alike in their braird and blade, but the first leaves soon fall off, the grass is built up stalk by stalk, the seed appears, and then men know its true nature. The life of God is hid, and the life without God is often hid too. Be not misled by appearances; do not judge others hastily; do not decide about men's hearts and their future. All is not good that seems, and all is not evil that

seems. All is not gold that glitters, and all is not mere earth that glitters not. Time will tell.

The servants wish to pluck up the tares there and then, but the master speaks in haste, as if waving them off with a gesture, "Not so, lest ye root up also the wheat with them." Notice his tender care for the wheat. The weakest stalks of wheat would be the most likely to be mistaken for tares, as being the least ripe, and also the most likely to be pulled up with the tares, as they could least resist force. The "first ripe" is the best, and the last to ripen is the least worth. But he will not allow one stalk of his wheat to perish: he will not permit anything to prevent that. Let them alone, and when they ripen, they will seem what they are, and then every chance of mistake shall have passed away. As the tares ripen, their first swathes or coverings fall off, the dark seed appears, very different from the bright hue of the wheat, and then the tares seem the miserable, shrunken impostors they are. The Bible test and the botanical is, "By their fruits ye shall know them"; not by their flowers, nor by their first tender shoots. The ripening tares inform against, judge, and condemn themselves. Their ripening is their judgment. You are under the self-same law. Your life is truly your judgment. Everything hid in your heart is ripening, and hasting to perfect and reveal itself. Nothing willingly remains half-formed or hidden. Our spirit decides our growth, ripens our character and fixes our doom. The Day of Judgment is like the day of harvest in Syrian wheat-fields: 'tis a day of revelation and separation. To be ripe is to be judged. Do not dream that judgment is something in the future, and depending entirely upon another; for it goes on now, and is shaped by yourself, as Christ here teaches. Your now decides your hereafter. As the seed at length bursts its showy coverings and declares itself, so character fixes doom. Suppose a case. The hate Cain nourishes makes it mark on soul and body. These strange marks grow as his vile purposes grow, till, when he is ready to slay Abel, the mark becomes visible to all upon his brow. The eye of God and of Angels may discern a ripening like this in all the wicked upon the face of the earth.

III. The Parting.—The tares are "the only authentic instance of poisonous qualities in any of the grasses." The tares and wheat must then be separated; the only question is when and how. Wheat mixed with tares is unfit for food or seed. The bread made from it is poison. And so there must be a separation between good and bad men. What Christ teaches about Heaven and hell is in the line of what we see around us every day. All things grow towards, predict, and prepare for this last separation. Earth is a mixed seed-field ripening for eternity's great harvest. It is a borderland where Heaven and hell meet in their beginnings. Earth lies midway between the two morally, if not, as some think, geographically. Good and bad grow side by side here. The good are growing better and the bad are growing worse. Earth is too bad for the good; they feel it keenly, and try to make it better. Earth is too good for the bad, and they try to make it worse, and more like themselves. As the good grow better and the bad worse, they feel more that they cannot remain together. Like fire and water, they won't unite. They turn away from each other, and often refuse to remain together till God's day of separation. You visit the family of one of your comrades; but his portrait is not now on the wall, his photo is not in the family album, his school prizes lie no more on the drawing-room table, his name is never breathed, not one trace of him appears in the home of which he once was the joy and pride. What has now turned out a poisonous tare seemed in infancy the finest of the wheat. Your comrade was corrupted, and went from bad to worse, till he took a devil-like delight in

leading astray his brothers and sisters. Not to a father in such a case did Christ say, "Let both grow together." He tolerates green tares in His field, but not the thorns and thistles that choke the wheat, not the ripe tares that poison the wheat. The father, one of the best of men, with a breaking heart, must banish his son; and you own that he did right, and the outcast himself owns it too. Or here is the prodigal of a good family. As they grow better and he worse, the gulf between them widens every day. The hot young man is maddened by the habits of the house, its church-going, Bible-reading, family worship, etc., and so goes to the far country, right glad to be rid of the hated restraints.

What a mistake to fancy that our character is made by circumstances, or environment, as some call it. The tares and wheat are in the self-same field, and have the same sunshine, the same showers, the same everything. But the wheat drinks in, by strange chemical affinity, what suits it, and rejects all else; and the tares do the same. The nature within overcomes all that is without. Your character is fixed chiefly by the state of your heart, by your will and choice. Oh, how often the family likeness between sisters and brothers ends in the features. It is in every part of the body, but nowhere in the soul. What we have here as parable we have often as history in many a home, and strikingly in earth's first home. Cain and Abel grew up as tares and wheat in the first-sown corner of the wheat-field. Strange that the martyr and his murderer should be both men and be brothers too, and brothers more closely united than any two brothers have been since.

Partings are the most touching part of our life-story. Who can forget the day when, with a surging heart, he first left his home, father, mother, brother, or sister convoying him first to the road-end, then to the first mile-stone, and then to the second; and how, when alone, he halted to look back, and the endeared forms and the old homestead had vanished. But to part on the last day, to part for ever, after a lifelong union, Christ commanding it and the good Angels executing it! O our God! unite us and ours in the bundle of life! As there are only tares and wheat in the field, you should ask, To which of the two do I belong? That is a far greater question than, Shall I be rich, or happy, or successful in life?

IV. The Endings.—These are two, the burning and the barn. Our merciful Saviour describes the burning in most minute and solemn words, and we should lay each of them to heart. He beautifully describes the end of the righteous, that is, those who are right, all right before God. They "shall shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father." Their true glory is now hid from the eyes of men, for they are concealed, as the sun behind thick clouds. But then they shall shine forth as the sun in an Eastern sky after a storm. It is light in all its glory; it is "light solidified," light conquering every obstacle, and claiming the homage of all beholders. "They shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, as the stars for ever and ever."

You know that all the truth is not in this parable, else Christ had not given us some thirty parables. The tares are wild, lapsed, outcast wheat, and farmers believe that in bad seasons the wheat itself turns to tares. But I have not read that tares ever turn into wheat. Yet such a change takes place every day in Christ's Kingdom. Saul of Tarsus becomes Paul the preacher, and the dying thief—a tare that seems ripe and ready for burning—under Jesus' word is savingly changed at the eleventh hour, and that very day gathered into Paradise. This parable is not against the free Gospel or the wonder-working power of God's grace. It only teaches how good and bad are mixed on earth, and how our character grows here and decides our hereafter.

These words are for all, and so Jesus adds, "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." The poet describes the Indian hunter living near Niagara, who has no ears to hear its thunders, but who can hear the rustling of a leaf a mile away. He did not wish to hear the waterfall, but he greatly wished to hear the approaching footfall of foe or game; and so he dulled his ear against that, and quickened it toward this. Dull your ear likewise against earth's rude, stunning noises, and, like the child Samuel, be eager to catch the gentle voice of Jesus speaking to you from Heaven. God give you an ear to hear what His Spirit is saying to you!—*Rev. James Wells, D.D.*

Critical Notes on the Gospel

I. The Field is the World (vers. 24, 38).—24. *The Kingdom of Heaven.* Which Jesus as King had come to establish on earth, in which the laws of Heaven are obeyed on earth, and thus earth becomes like Heaven. *Sowed good seed in his field.* The field is the world, not the Church merely. The good seed began to be sown as soon as man was created. There have always been good men on earth, who have been filled with truth and grace from God (Acts x. 35). And still throughout the world for which Christ died is the good seed to be sown. We should not leave the smallest portion of the world—not the least island, not the remotest nation, not the lowest savage tribe—without the good seed.

II. The Sower and the Good Seed (vers. 24, 38).—A man which soweth good seed. The Man is God, Who is the source of all good seed. He began in the Garden of Eden, and has been sowing ever since. He, not Satan, owns the world. The good seed are "the children of the Kingdom," those who in heart belong to the Kingdom, are filled with its spirit and live according to its principles.

1. God's children are seed, not mere grains of sand; for they are living, they are the means of increasing the disciples, through them the whole world is to be filled with the fruits of the Spirit, and the children of the Kingdom. Dead seeds do not increase. A dead church does not grow; and this is fortunate, for neither God nor man desires an increase of that kind of Christians or churches. 2. There is a great variety of good seed adapted to all seasons and all circumstances, producing different kinds of fruit at different times. 3. Each produces fruit after its kind. It is necessary to *be* good if we would increase goodness. Imperfect Christians tend to multiply imperfect Christians. Every error or fault of ours is doubly evil—it injures ourselves and it injures others. 4. All Christians are God planted, planted where He desires them to be. When John Williams, afterwards martyred at Erromanga, went out to the South Seas, he carried with him a few choice bananas from the hot-houses of the Duke of Devonshire at Chatsworth. On arrival they had become a mass of rotten pulp, and were thrown away on a heap as utterly worthless. Out of them, however, there sprang one plant of vigour and fruitfulness; and the product, being re-sown, was the origin of the common banana of the South Seas that still holds its own.

III. The Enemy Sowing Tares (vers. 25-27, 38, 39).—25. *But while men slept,* i.e. at night, in secret. It was not when the sower slept, for "he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep"; nor when the Church is asleep, for Satan is often most busy sowing tares when the Church is awake and in earnest, but secretly, unobserved, unrecognised. "How often," says Trench, "the beginnings of evil have been scarcely discernible; how often has that which bore the worst fruit in the end, appeared at first like a higher form of good!" *His enemy.* The devil, the opposer of all good. He began to

sow his tares in the Garden of Eden, and has been sowing ever since. *Sowed tares among the wheat.* The Greek word means that he *over*-sowed, sowed the tares where the wheat had already been sown. Such malice as this was well understood by his hearers. Trench relates a similar trick of malice from Ireland, where he knew an outgoing tenant who, in spite at his ejection, sowed wild oats in the fields of the proprietor, which ripened and seeded themselves before the crops, so that it became next to impossible to get rid of them. Dr Alford, too, mentions that a field belonging to him in Leicestershire was maliciously sown with charlock, and that heavy damages were obtained by the tenant against the offender. *Tares* "are not a degenerate kind of wheat, as both the natives and many commentators have imagined, but a distinct species which has no original relationship to wheat or barley." It is a kind of darnel resembling American chess or cheat. "It is both a narcotic and an emetic, and much more active in these properties than its congener, the darnel of Europe." "In the Greek Testament the word (plural form) is *zizania.* This is from the same root as the Arabic *zawân,* and is derived from *zân* (vomiting), because the seeds, if eaten, produce violent nausea." It is said to be the only grass which bears a poisonous seed, "a fitting symbol of the fruit of the devil's sowing." It grows frequently with the wheat and so nearly resembles it as to be practically indistinguishable until the grain is headed out. "There can be no mistake then. As once I heard it remarked in that country, 'the ears which God has blessed bow their heads, but these accursed tares stick theirs above the whole field!' For the tare then carries a tall light head of small dark grains which in every respect contrasts with the weighty golden ear of the good seed." 27. *Whence then hath it tares?* The same question troubles reformers and preachers. They come from the enemy, and not from God. *The Interpretation.* The tares are the children of the wicked one, who are filled with his spirit, live according to his principles, and are under his control. They are not a degenerate form of virtue, but as distinct as virtue and vice. They often resemble the good till the fruit begins to appear. They are living, and propagate their kind. "Two Scotchmen emigrated in the early days to California. Each thought to take with him some memorial of his beloved country. One of them, an enthusiastic lover of Scotland, took with him a thistle, the national emblem. The other took a small swarm of honey bees. Years have passed away. The Pacific coast is, on the one hand, cursed with the Scotch thistle, which the farmers find it impossible to exterminate; on the other hand, the forests and fields are fragrant and laden with the sweetness of honey, which has been and is still one of the blessings of the western slope of the Rocky Mountains." Something similar took place in Australia, with thistles and rabbits (see "Land of the Kangaroo," p. 126). So weeds sprang up from the straw in which one of Thorwalsden's statues was packed. "Botanists assure us that the North American continent now abounds with European weeds which the colonists unwittingly introduced with the grains they brought with them." Satan uses sometimes very good people to sow his seed for him.

IV. Wheat and Tares Growing Together (vers. 28-30). 28. *Wilt thou then that we . . . gather them up?* The tares ought not to be there. They are an evil. Let us root them out. 29. *Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat.* Because there was danger of mistaking the wheat for tares; because the roots of the two were intertwined together; and because the wheat would be trodden down by anyone going through it for the purpose. 30. *Let both grow together until the harvest,* when these difficulties will be removed. *The Interpretation.* 1. We must expect to

find bad men in the Church, in every reform, in every good cause. It is folly to say with some that we will not join any society that has bad men in it. 2. Most people have tares in their characters. "There are tares in the vegetable world, fierce passions among holy emotions, bad principles in intellectual systems, dangerous notions mingled with the loftiest piety." 3. "Never has there been a fresh beginning for better things in this world without its affording new opportunities of its own making for the growth of tares. Hence have come the sad disappointments of many reformers, who, while rejoicing at the doing away of old evils, as if every evil would then cease, have quite forgotten how men with selfish instincts would find this newly prepared field good for them also. Thus we can imagine how the heroes of liberty in English or American history would be dismayed if they could return now to the scenes of their labours. In view of the rank growth of abuses in our legislative and municipal affairs, how natural it would be for them to exclaim, 'Did we not sow good seed in this field? From whence then hath it tares?'" 4. While there are thorns, so near the edge of the wheat-field, and so different from the wheat, that no mistake can be made (as in 1 Cor. v. 4, 5), yet the attempt to separate all tares from the wheat is a most unwise and useless process. "Thorns represent evil within us, tares evil without." "The good and the evil are not found here as genuine and counterfeit coins may be heaped together." But the roots are interwoven. Persecutions and trials for heresy have more often rooted up wheat than tares. 5. "Wiser would it be to accept the simple thought of the Syrian peasants, who to this day believe that tares can best be kept down by nourishing to the utmost the life of the good seed." 6. It is wise to let wheat and tares grow together, because the wheat may have a good influence over the tares, as in the parable of the leaven. "We are not to suppose that the wheat can never become tares, or the tares wheat: this would be to contradict the purpose of Him Who willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live; and this gracious purpose shines through the command, Let both grow together till the harvest." "Cultivation, improvement by tillage, has done a good deal for some weeds. The potato used to be called a weed, but we do not call it so now, because, by much care and attention, it has become useful, profitable, and far from troublesome to man. I think the tomato was once called a weed also. You can see why it is no longer. Perhaps some of you can remember, or find out, about other plants that have lost the odious title." 7. Christians themselves are educated and disciplined by contact with the tares. They would not be nearly so good if shut off in a community by themselves. Tares would still come in. If the wheat does not seek to change the tares into wheat, the wheat will degenerate into tares.

Anecdotes and Illustrations

Scattering Bad Seeds.—A woman who had used her tongue freely in scandalising her neighbours, went to a priest and made confession of this fault. He gave her a ripe thistle-top and told her to go out and scatter the seeds one by one. She obeyed and returned. To her amazement he told her to go back and gather up the scattered seeds. When she said this was impossible, he replied that it would be still more difficult to gather up and destroy all the evil reports which she had circulated among her neighbours.

An Enemy Hath Done This.—A missionary laboured in an African village until the people loved him and worshipped his God. He then left

them for other spheres. In his absence some traders visited the village and were welcomed as brothers of the missionary. But they deceived the natives and plied them with brandy. Then the human tempters went their way, leaving hatred and crime where there had been love and peace.

The Good and the Bad.—The world is like a tropical forest, where all manner of trees grow side by side, lashed together by a multitude of creepers, and not like a botanical garden, where each species is planted in a row by itself. And it is well that this condition of things will be, says Jesus, as long as the world lasts; for such close contact of His servants with godless men is necessary if the Kingdom is to grow. The salt of the earth has to be in closest juxtaposition in order to preserve and heal men.

Our Enemies.—A little girl, whose finger was inflamed and festering, felt it to be hot and painful. She had no relief until the tiny thorn that hid itself in her flesh was removed. Some days later, having been naughty and angry, she came to her mother's knee and tearfully whispered: "Mother, I'm afraid I've got a thistle in my heart." Evil passions are like tares in the field, and just as troublesome.

Danger of Uprooting Wheat with Tares.—History is full of such fatal attempts at uprooting. Who imprisoned John Bunyan as a pestilent fellow? Were all the men who persecuted the Wesleys wicked men? No; some were good, but narrow. These had all set for themselves the impossible task of uprooting the tares, and in their zeal they rooted up also the wheat.

Sowing Tares.—This act of deliberate malice appears to be quite unknown in Syria, in modern times. One distinguished traveller says that he never met with such an occurrence during more than a quarter of a century's residence in Palestine. Turning over the pages of an old newspaper, some time since, I came upon the following remarkable illustration of the practice referred to by the Great Teacher in the parable above quoted: "The country of Ill Will is the byname of a district hard by St Arnaud, in the North of France. There, tenants, when ejected by a landlord, or when they have ended their tenancy on uncomfortable terms, have been in the habit of spoiling the crop to come by vindictively sowing tares, and other coarse strangling weeds, among the wheat, whence has been derived the sinister name in question. The practice has been made penal; and any man proved to have tampered with any other man's harvest will be dealt with as a criminal."

Questions on the Gospel

1. What did the man sow in his field? 2. Who came while men slept? 3. What did he sow? 4. What happened when the seed began to grow? 5. What question did the servants ask their master? 6. What answer did he give them? 7. What did they ask him to let them do? 8. Did he let them do it? 9. What did he say would have been the harm of gathering up the tares then? 10. Were they ever to be gathered up? 11. If so, when? 12. Then what was to be done with them? 13. Who sowed the good seed? 14. What was the seed? 15. What is the harvest? 16. Who are the reapers? 17. What is to happen at the end of the world? 18. What does this parable teach us?

Books of Reference

Trench on "Miracles"; *Bruce's* "Miraculous Element in the Gospels"; *Geikie's* "Life and Words of Christ"; *Edersheim's* "Jesus the Messiah"; *Farrar's* "Life of Christ"; "Cambridge Bible"; "Expositor's Bible"; "Biblical Illustrator"; *Hasting's* "Dictionary of the Bible."

The Epistle

COLOSSIANS III. 12-17.

Greatheart

"Put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."—Col. iii. 14.

In Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" we read "So he called a servant of his named Greatheart, and bade him get sword, helmet, and shield. Then pointing to Christiana and her children, he said: 'Take these and conduct them to the house called Beautiful.' So Greatheart took his weapons, and the pilgrims went, and Greatheart went before them."

Do not think Greatheart is a man in a story-book. Greatheart is in the world to-day. Anyone who lives not for *self*, but for others, and for God, and for what is noble and good, is Greatheart. By a few stories I will illustrate some of the things that make Greatheart beautiful to us.

GREATHEART IS GENTLE.—When Napoleon Bonaparte went to Russia to fight against the city of Moscow, the city was set on fire and all burned to desert. So the French soldiers under Napoleon set off on their homeward march in the cold winter. It was a terrible winter, when deep snow lay on the ground, and bitter frost-winds blew upon the men. They were in a strange land, where they could have no shelter, so as they went along soldier after soldier grew numb with cold and fell down to die. Among these was a little drummer boy. His legs could carry him no farther, he lost all feeling, his brain reeled, and he fell on the cold ground. The soldiers with whom he was marching went on and left him there. It was each for himself, and no one of them had time to think of anyone else, so on they went, leaving the boy to his fate. Soldier after soldier tramped along, only looking at the little body and then passing on. At last a soldier came along and saw the boy. Poor tired frozen man though he was, he stopped to bend over the lad and found that he was still alive. It was hard work, for no one knew how far he could go without falling a victim to the cold. But this soldier had a tender heart. He said, I cannot leave this poor little fellow here. I must take my chance with him whether I live or die. So he lifted the boy off the ground and put him, all senseless, on his shoulders and carried him until they reached shelter and warmth, and so saved his life. The Frenchman had one thing that belongs to all who are great in heart.

GREATHEART IS UNSELFISH.—One of the first lessons for us to learn is how to look after ourselves. But we must do that without being selfish. Some people seem born to selfishness. It is always "self first" with them. Poor wretched creatures, who do not know how selfish they are, and who consider nobody but themselves. If anything like that is in our hearts we must fight against it—we must deny ourselves and take up our cross, and not always forget everything but ourselves.

Now a really noble heart naturally, easily, unconsciously, considers other people and not self only. During the Franco-German war, an army of Frenchmen was inside the city of Metz, besieged by the Germans. A great many wounded soldiers were carried into the hospital—so many that the supply of chloroform ran short. Chloroform (as you know) is used to make people insensible of pain while the surgeons are performing operations.

Orders were given to the doctors to use the chloroform as sparingly as possible, so as to make it last longer. One day after a fight, a French guardsman came into the operating-room with his hand shattered by a ball. An amputation was necessary, and the doctor said to the man: "Do you think you could let me perform the operation without putting you off with chloroform?" "No," the man said, "I have suffered so much already, I can bear no more." "But," said the doctor, "we have very little chloroform, and we want to save it for the very worst cases." "Very well, then," he said, "we poor fellows must help one another—keep the chloroform for someone who is wounded worse than I am." So the plucky man lay down—put his handkerchief in his mouth to stifle his cries, and bore the pain of the operation.

Now the wounded soldier shows us another thing that belongs to great-heartedness.

Greatheart is Forgiving.—We all do things sometimes that need to be forgiven, and people forgive us and God forgives us. And so we must not be spiteful and resentful and malicious, but learn to say, "Well, never mind," and so forgive any who do us wrong.

In an old book there is a story of one of those crusading knights I have spoken of. He had gone to fight in the Holy Land in those foolish wars of that time, and was taken prisoner by a Turk, who used him very cruelly. At last money was given to the Turk, for what is called ransom. At great cost the knight was set free from his cruel prison, where his hardships and sufferings had almost ended his life. The war went on, and one day it chanced that this same Turk was taken prisoner by the soldiers of the knight, who brought him before their master. There they stood face to face. The tables had turned, and the prisoner was now master of his former tyrant. The knight thought a little as he looked at his captive, and then he said: "So it is my turn now, what do you expect from me?" "Retribution," said the Turk. "Yes," said the knight, "you shall have the retribution of a Christian. If you will not fight against us you shall go safely to your home in peace, for the Christ we serve has said: 'Love your enemies.'"

It is great—it is Godlike to be merciful and forgiving. A forgiving spirit—that is another quality of Greatheart.

Greatheart is True.—One very cold day in Edinburgh a gentleman stood at the door of an hotel, when a poor pinched-looking boy, with red bare feet, and all in rags, came and said, "Please buy a box of matches." "No, I don't want any." "But they are only a penny." "But I don't want them." "You shall have two boxes for a penny," said the boy. Well, to get rid of him the gentleman put his hand in his pocket to get a penny. He found he had no change, so he said to the little match-seller: "Run way, I have no change." "O, but," said the boy, "I am very hungry, do buy a box and I will get change for you." The gentleman gave the boy a shilling, and off he went, and after a little while the gentleman got tired of waiting. He said: "I feared it would be so—I've lost my shilling. I'm sorry—for the boy seemed to have an honest face, though I hardly could suppose he would come back."

Well, late at night, one of the servants of the hotel came and said that a boy wanted to see the gentleman that bought the matches. It was a small brother of the match-boy. He stood searching his little ragged pockets for something, and then said: "Are you the gentleman that bought the matches from Sandy?" "Yes." "Well, here's fourpence of your shilling. Sandy can't come, he's not well; a cart ran over him and knocked him down, and he lost his matches and the rest of the money, and his leg's broken; and that's all he can give you now," said the little fellow, as he held out the fourpence.

The gentleman fed the boy, and then started off with him to see Sandy, and found it was so. "I got the change and was running back, and a horse knocked me down and broke my leg," said Sandy. It was a bad fracture, and the poor hunger-bitten child never recovered, and the gentleman visited and took care of him till he died.

Poor little fellow, he had a true heart. Many little things who run the streets as he had to do are not true-hearted like Sandy. It is great to be so steeped in truth that it must always show itself in us.

Thus Sandy shows us another attribute of greatheartedness—he was True.

Greatheart is Brave.—During the Indian Mutiny, some of our English soldiers fell into the power of the Sepoys. The Sepoys behaved as cruelly as tigers. As you know, they were either Mohammedans or believers in some other heathen religion. Now it is a fact, that in some cases the Sepoys made this offer to young English soldiers who were their prisoners: "You must deny your English God and blaspheme Jesus Christ, and we will let you live. If you will not you shall die." And in many and many a case they did die, manfully. Some of those youths laughed at religion in their tents and barracks. Some of them cared nothing about it, and dare not have lived quite as Christians should, for fear of being ridiculed. But face to face with those Sepoys, who said: "If you do not blaspheme and deny Christ you shall die," the rough English lads said: "Then we will die." And Christ said of them: "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him will I confess before My Father in Heaven."

Well that is another point with Greatheart—he is Brave.

Now I must end these stories. Very few people have hearts great enough to contain all good qualities. Some have one good thing, and some another, and some have many good things; but whose heart is quite full of all goodness? Greathearts are gentle and unselfish, and forgiving, and true, and brave, and much more beside. All that is beautiful and all that is good is in those who are great in heart and soul.

According to the "Pilgrim's Progress," from which we get the character of Greatheart, that noble man was a guide to pilgrims. He was so considerate, so interesting to talk to, and so ready to fight all giants and enemies of pilgrims, that whoever reads his story feels—I should like to be something like him.

It seems like a picture of Jesus Himself. He was sweet and kind, good and forgiving, true and brave, and everything that is noble. And Jesus is really our great Guide as we go through the world. We want to be with Him and to be like Him. If you go with Him you do grow like Him, just as if you walk regularly with anyone you catch his step. Being a Christian, means walking with Christ, and so growing like Christ. He is our model of all good things.

But He is not only the model of good things in us. He is the Maker of good things in us. He can take rough, selfish, unforgiving, false, cowardly hearts, and change them till they are something like His own. He will do this if we love Him and ask Him to do it. Loving Him makes us grow like Him.

Some of you have younger brothers and sisters, and you might be the Greathearts of your family. And when you grow to be men and women, you might be the Greathearts of the circle you move in. So follow Jesus. Love Him. Try to be like Him if you would do good, and glorify God, and win the true happiness of life.—*Rev. S. Gregory.*

Hasty Words

"Let the peace of God rule in your hearts."—Col. iii. 15.

Half the actual trouble of life would be saved if people would but remember that silence is golden, when they are irritated, vexed, or annoyed. To feel provoked or exasperated at a trifle when the nerves are exhausted is perhaps natural to us, in our imperfectly sanctified state. But why put the annoyance into the shape of speech, which once uttered is remembered, which may burn like a blistering wound or rankle like a poisoned arrow? If a child be trying, or a friend capricious, or a servant unreasonable, be careful what you say. Do not speak while you feel the impulse of anger, for you will be almost certain to say too much, to say more than your cooler judgment will approve, and to speak in a way that you will regret. Be silent till the "sweet by and by," when you shall be calm, rested, and self-controlled.

Above all, never write a letter when you are in the mood of irritation. There is an anger which is justifiable; there are resentments which are righteous; it is sometimes a duty to express indignation. But if you consider the matter, the occasions for putting such feelings on record are comparatively few. They come once in a lifetime, perhaps; and to many fortunate beings they never come at all. Upon the whole, people—our friends and neighbours, and the community of which we form a part—are trying to do the best they can; and in hours of good temper and health life wears a bright and sunny aspect. Much of the friction which makes the machinery of living move roughly and discordantly is caused by things too petty to be noticed if we were in our normal condition. The hasty word spoken in petulance may be explained, forgiven, and forgotten. But the letter, written in an ebullition of wounded feeling, is a fact tangible, not to be condoned. There it lies, with a certain permanence about it. You have sent it to a friend, who, reading it half a dozen times, will each time find it more cruel and incisive than before. Letters once written and sent away cannot be recalled. You cannot be sure that your friend (or enemy) will burn them. Hidden in bureau drawers or in compartments of desks, folded up in portfolios, locked in boxes, they will, it may be, flash up again in sudden feud and fire months after you have ceased to think of the folly which incited them or the other folly which penned them.

Never write an angry letter or write a letter when you are angry. All heated feeling seeks the superlative as an outlet, and superlatives are apt to be dangerous. So long as we cling to the positive in speech, we are pretty safe.

We all need to be cautioned against undue haste in speech, but mothers most of all. It is so easy to misunderstand a child; so easy to grieve a little person who is forbidden to answer back; so easy to leave a picture of yourself in the plastic memory, which will be photographed there for the remainder of life and of which you would in coming days be ashamed. Let who will be hasty and uncontrolled, the mother cannot afford to be either; and if she ask the help of her Lord daily, hourly, and every moment, she will be kept from this sin and peril.

Do it Heartily

"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily to the Lord."—Col. iii. 23.

I. Introductory.—Mother calls to her two boys at play—says, "I want you each to go on an errand for me." One looks brightly up at his mother's

face, leaves his game, bounds off to his mother, hears her message, takes his cap, and gladly runs off to obey her. The other is displeased at having to leave his play, comes slowly and sulkily up, and crossly and discontentedly does his mother's bidding. Which boy do you like best? Which would you wish to be like?

II. HEARTILY.—Explain the old saying: "What is worth doing at all is worth doing well"; and to do anything well we must do it heartily—i.e. willingly, actively, cheerfully, joyfully—like the little boy of whom we spoke just now. That is what we mean by heartily—with all our hearts—all the power we have—as well as we can, and as gladly as we can. This is the way in which the text tells us to act.

III. "WHATSOEVER YE DO."—Whatever we have to do that is right for us to do—all that we know we ought to do at home, at school, at play, wherever we go—all that God gives us to do in this life—learning a lesson at school, helping mother at home, pleasing a brother or sister, doing a kindness for a friend, schoolfellow, or stranger, etc., etc.—all should be done heartily. Who would care to have a gift from a person who did not wish to give it? or to have something done for them by a person who did not wish to do it? Your teacher would value a little flower—a buttercup or a daisy—brought to him (or her) willingly and gladly by a child who loved him, more than a handsome present sent him by one whom he did not know or love. To be worth having, all that we do must be done heartily.

IV. AS TO THE LORD.—Doing something for the Lord—for Jesus Christ. All these duties, these right acts, we have spoken of, may be done for Jesus. Just think of that—little children may do something for Jesus!—not great things that they cannot do, but little things that they can do, every day and every hour of their lives. If they do try to do right, to please Jesus, He will be pleased, for He sees everything they do, how they do it, and why they do it. So a child, however young, may please Jesus by trying heartily to learn his lesson, by going on an errand heartily, by helping his brother or sister heartily, by a gift or kindness to a poor stranger—given or done heartily. Jesus smiles on little children who desire to please Him.

V. WHO WILL DO THIS?—Those who love Jesus. They think, very often, of how much Jesus loves them, and of all He has done for them, and they love Him in return, and wish to show their love by doing those things which will please Him. Those who do not love Christ will not care to please Him. They can never be as happy as the loving children of Jesus who delight to serve and please Him. It is good to please our parents, friends, and teachers; but it is best of all to please our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Unselfish Lives

A little girl was asked what was the meaning of the word happy. Her answer was beautiful: "It is to feel as if you wanted to give all your things to your little sister." That spirit, if it were common, would change the world's life.

I read a curious Indian legend the other day. It was translated into English by the daughter of Sir Bartle Frere. It ran something like this:

The Sun, and the Moon, and the Wind, on one occasion went out to dine with their uncle and aunt, the Thunder and Lightning. One of the most distant stars was their mother, and she waited for their return.

Apparently the Sun and the Wind were greedy and selfish. They revelled in the great feast, but never thought to take any back for their mother. The Moon was more thoughtful, and of every dainty dish set before them,

she hid a portion of the contents under one of her beautiful long finger-nails—this was for mother.

On their return, the mother, who had watched them with her bright eye, asked them what they had brought for her. The Sun and the Wind both said that they had been out to enjoy themselves, and not to bring dainties home for her. The sweet Moon then asked for a plate, and, shaking her hands, she produced such a dinner as had never been seen before.

The Star then said to the Sun that such selfishness must be punished. The punishment awarded was that the sun's rays should ever be hot and scorching, and should burn all that they touched. That, as the legend says, is why the sun in India is so hot even to this day.

Then, turning to the Wind, the Star said that such selfishness should also be punished, and in future it should always blow in the hot, dry weather, and should parch and shrivel all living things, and should ever be hated by all. That, so the legend says, is why the wind in the hot weather is so trying and disagreeable in India.

The Moon for her kindness was rewarded, and the reward was that from that time she should always be cool, and calm, and bright, her pure rays should hurt no one, and she was to be always loved by all. And so it is that the moon's light is soft and sweet and cool even to this day.

It is a strange legend, is it not? What I like about it is the clear insight the Indian people had into the ugliness of selfishness. I hope that the legend may help you to see with their eyes. There is nothing beautiful about selfishness. But what a sweet thing is the spirit of unselfishness, generousness, kindness!

During the Crimean War, two men were carried into the military hospital, one evidently at the point of death, the other almost as bad. The stronger of the two, on being asked by one of the nurses what she could do for him, replied quietly: "Oh, I'll be well enough; just look after my poor comrade there, neither bite nor sup has he had for these three days." The nurse immediately offered the cup of wine and water to the other dying man. With trembling hands the poor fellow grasped it and was about to relieve his intolerable thirst, when he suddenly stopped and said: "There was a friend of mine came in with me. He's fearful bad, and this would do him a lot of good. Find him, will you, and give it him." Already death was blinding his eyes, and he knew not that his comrade lay in the next bed.

They are still lying side by side, these two friends, in the burial-ground of Scutari.

You, I am sure, like that noble, generous spirit better than the behaviour of the sun and the wind in the legend. No "me first" there! That is the spirit to cultivate, the spirit that will make the world a bright place for you, and give you true happiness and nobility.

I have read how St Macarius lived with his little brotherhood in the midst of the desert. One day, someone brought him a bunch of grapes, very welcome in that parched and burning waste of sand. The Saint would not take the fruit for himself, but handed it on to a brother. He was equally unselfish, and passed it to another; but all in turn refused, so that at last the grapes returned to St Macarius. That is a beautiful story! It may not be, when you are unselfish, that the thing you give away will come back to you—you must not expect it to do so—that would be selfish; but you will get something back from every act of love, and from every gift of service rendered freely and generously. You will get back nobleness of life and beauty of character, and you will have the "Well done!" of Jesus.

—Rev. J. Learmount.

Critical Notes on the Epistle

I. The True Spirit of the Christian Family (vers. 12-14).—12. *Put on therefore.* Dr Maclaren speaks of these verses as a description of "The Garments of the Renewed Soul," and "the wardrobe of the consecrated soul." For these virtues are represented here as put on, not having existed before, and as enfolding the whole life like a garment which covers, adorns, and protects the whole body. Nor is this inconsistent with the fact that every virtue must grow out of a right heart. We speak of trees putting on their leaves, although the leaves grow out of the tree. So these graces should grow on all sides freely, flourishingly, till they form a beautiful garment. *As the elect.* The chosen ones of *God*, in whom He delights, for they are *holy*, consecrated in heart and life, thus belonging to God, *and beloved* of Him as children are beloved of their parents. These two words describe the proof that one is chosen, and the love that accompanies the choice. First, Compassion. *Bowels of mercies.* Rev. Ver., *a heart of compassion.* Every person, rich or poor, prosperous or unfortunate, sick or well, has need of sympathy for his trials, his weaknesses, his errors, his failures, his aspirations. (1) "Without it no help will be of much use to the receiver, nor of any to the giver. Much is said about ingratitude, but very often it is but the instinctive recoil of the heart from the unkind doer of a kindness. Aid flung to a man as a bone is to a dog usually gets as much gratitude as the sympathy which it expresses deserves." (2) Above all things, beware of letting pity (meant to be the impulse toward help) be excited and then not allowing the emotion to act. To stimulate feeling and do nothing in consequence is a short road to destroy the feeling. (3) Sympathy and compassion are as necessary for the giver as for the receiver. They keep the heart from growing narrow and selfish and limited.

> "The Quality of Mercy is not strained;
> It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
> Upon the place beneath; it is twice blessed;
> It blesseth him that gives and him that takes."
>
> —*Shakespeare.*

Second, Kindness, from *kin, kinned-ness*, having the feelings which befit a common nature. In the Greek the root of the word is *profitableness*, that kindly disposition that would do good to others, profit them. "Some souls are so dowered that they have this grace without effort, and come like the sunshine with welcome and cheer for all the world. But even less happily endowed natures can cultivate the disposition." "The prudent hypocrites who get on in the world, as ships are launched, by 'greasing the ways' with flattery and smiles, teach us the value of the true thing, since even a coarse caricature of it wins hearts and disarms foes. This 'kindness' is the most powerful solvent of ill-will and indifference." Third, Humbleness of Mind. A lowly estimate of ourselves is not necessarily blindness to our strong points. If a man can do certain things better than his neighbours, he can hardly help knowing it, and Christian humility does not require him to be ignorant of it. I suppose Milton would be none the less humble, though he was quite sure that his work was better than that of Sternhold and Hopkins. The consciousness of power usually accompanies power. And often it accompanies also a very small degree of power magnified by the telescope of self-conceit. Humility does not exalt itself on account of God's gifts; it sees its weaknesses

as well as its power; it sees and acknowledges the greatness and goodness in others. Each one has something which others can look up to, and each one can find something as to which he must look up to others. Hence between husband and wife there can be mutual admiration and respect; and a similar experience among members of the church. Fourth, Meekness. That is, patience under injuries real or supposed; the opposite of revenge. The meek are not easily provoked or irritated. In order to be meek there must be *long-suffering*, patient endurance of the faults and disagreeable qualities of others. It is our business to be right and to do right, no matter what others do or say. Now since those who live in the same family are of different tastes and dispositions, and see things from different standpoints—a fact on which depends much of the best discipline of life—there can be no happiness, no best life, without meekness and longsuffering.

"We may not know how earnestly
They struggled, or how well,
Until the hour of weakness came,
And sadly thus they fell.

Heir of the selfsame heritage,
Child of the selfsame God,
They have but stumbled in the path
We have in weakness trod."

Fifth. 13. *Forbearing one another.* This is "meekness and long-suffering in exercise." Two words of household peace are the two "bears," —"bear and "forbear." To forbear is "to restrain and control oneself when provoked."

"The kindest and the happiest pair
Will find occasion to forbear."—*Cowper.*

And forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel (Rev. Ver., *complaint*, a cause of quarrel) *against any.* Such occasions are sure to rise, and there is only one way of treating them—by the spirit of forgiveness. *Even as Christ forgave you.* We have been forgiven for far greater offences than those which we must forgive. If we are Christ's we must exhibit Christ's spirit, and what that is we have experienced. This experience enables us to put ourselves in the place of those who have sinned against us.

Is this list of virtues practical, and noble, and worthy? Yes; for he who has these has the elements of what are called the heroic virtues. These are the household heroisms, the daily and hourly cultivation of the qualities which make heroes and martyrs. "By the side of its serene and lofty beauty, the 'heroic virtues' embodied in the world's type of excellence show vulgar and glaring, like some daub representing a soldier, the sign-post of a public-house, by the side of Angelico's white-robed visions on the still convent walls. More self-command, more heroic firmness, more contempt for the popular estimate, more of everything strong and manly, will find a nobler field in subduing passion and cherishing forgiveness, which the world thinks folly and spiritless, than anywhere else. Better is he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."

14. *And above all these things.* Or over all as a bond or girdle; or as "the outer garment which holds the others in their places, the power which unites together all the graces which make up perfection." *Put on charity.* Love. *Which is the bond of perfectness.* "Love is the general principle,

harmonising all the special graces named above." Not one of the other graces is perfect without love, and love binds all into one character, for love is a part of all, and produces all. It is the life of the tree that binds all the branches into one tree. Set beside these truths the similar description in Ephesians.

II. The Means of Attaining these Graces (vers. 15-17).—(1) The peace of Christ; (2) the word of Christ; (3) the name of Christ. First, The Peace of Christ. 15. *The peace of God.* Rev. Ver. with the oldest MSS. read *Christ.* It is the peace which He gives (John xiv. 27); peace like His, peace with God, peace with men, peace of conscience, peace of forgiven sin, peace from rest in God's love and care. This is the condition of soul in which the graces can best flourish. *Rule in your hearts.* Act as umpire; a figure borrowed from the Grecian game—restrain passion, calm all internal conflict, govern and control all exercises of the soul. "Peace is the Queen of the Tournament." *To the which* (peace) *also ye are called in one body.* The united Church, the Body of Christ. The one body must be at peace with itself, and accomplishes this through the spirit of peace in each member. This peace is as necessary in the family as in the Church. *And be ye thankful.* Thankfulness promotes peace and unity, and aids every virtue. Thank God for His "peace that passeth understanding." Second, 16. *The Word of Christ.* The Gospel, all that Christ has to impart by way of instruction and guidance and promise. *Dwell in you.* Make its home, its abiding-place within you, not be merely an occasional guest. *Richly.* Abundantly, and with the varied riches of its truths and of its influence. *In all wisdom.* That it may be understood and applied aright, that errors may be avoided. Some connect this with the words that follow. *Teaching and admonishing.* Or warning of danger. This should be done in all wisdom, by means of *psalms,* the Book of Psalms; *and hymns,* "the new product of the spirit of devotion"; *and spiritual songs,* poetic productions of various kinds, often such as can be repeated or sung alone, but spiritual, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and not the degrading, impure songs so common among the heathen, and not yet wholly eliminated from literature. *Singing with grace.* "Divine grace which works in the heart," and impels to sincere and heartfelt praise, and not a mere lip-service.

"We know from many sources that song had a large part in the worship of the early Church. Indeed, whenever a great quickening of religious life comes, a great burst of Christian song comes with it. The onward march of the Church has ever been attended by music of praise; 'as well the singers as the players on instruments' have been there." 2. That the teaching and admonishing is best done under the influence of hymns and music. This is true in the Church, is also true in the family. 3. That it is implied by "one another" that this is not confined to ministers, but extends to the members of the Church in meetings, like our prayer meetings. 4. Family prayers, reading the Word, singing, and praying together, are inestimable in their influence on the home. When business drives out family prayers, it is like driving away Angels and shutting out the sunshine.

Third, The Name of Christ. 17. *Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.* The name of Christ is the element in which all is done, which furnishes a motive and gives a character to the whole. It means at least two things—in obedience to His authority, and in dependence on His help. It means doing all for His sake to please Him, to carry on His work. And this all-pervasive noble motive exalts and ennobles every part of the life, lifts it from the narrow and the commonplace into the highest region of moral action.

Giving Thanks.—Here is repeated the exhortation of verse 15, showing

the value of a thankful spirit, that sees the Giver in every gift, and reads on every good the image and superscription of God.

Anecdotes and Illustrations

Bad Temper under Water.—"One of the strange effects that diving has upon those who practise it, is the invariable bad temper felt while working at the bottom; and as this irritability passes away as soon as the surface is reached again, it is only reasonable to suppose that it is caused by the unusual pressure of air inside the dress, affecting probably the lungs, and through them the brain. My experience has been that while below one may fly into the most violent passion at the merest trifle; for instance, the life-line held too tight or too slack, too much air or too little, or some imaginary wrongdoing on the part of the tender, or the boys above, will often cause the temper to rise. I have sometimes become so angry in a similar way that I have given the signal to pull up, with the express intention of knocking the heads off the entire crew; but as the surface was neared and the weight of air decreased, my feelings have gradually undergone a change for the better, until by the time I reached the ladder and had the face-glass unscrewed, I had forgotten for what I came up."—*H. P. Whitmarsh* in the "Century."

The Courtesy of a Great Man.—Mr Gladstone was coming from the House of Commons one foggy evening; the road was slippery and everybody seemed in a great hurry to get out of the irritating atmosphere. As the great statesman passed along Parliament Street, a little girl dropped a parcel, one of a number of little packages carried in her arms. Mr Gladstone immediately stooped and picked up the packet which he carried until he came near his house, when with a kindly word he gave it to the little maid and lifted his hat and turned away. It was a little thing, but it showed the nature of the man. Reality comes out in the small things of life; what we are in the things which we ourselves choose shows what we are in truth. Be real. Jesus is loved because He refused to be as all the religious teachers of His time; He was a voice, not an echo; the Son of God in reality.

"Whatsoever ye do," etc.—A noble saying is recorded of a member of our British House of Commons, who by his own industry and perseverance had won his way to that high position. A proud scion of the aristocracy one day taunted him with his humble origin, saying, "I remember when you blacked my father's boots." "Well, sir," was the noble response, "*did I not do it well?*"

Forbearing and Forgiving.—After Sir Eardley Wilmot had retired from the office of Lord Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, he was frequently consulted both on political and legal subjects. A person, who had filled many high stations in public life, one day went to Sir Eardley in great wrath and indignation at a real injury he had received from a person high in the political world. After relating the particulars to Sir Eardley he asked if he did not think it would be *manly* to resent it. "Yes," said Sir Eardley, "Certainly it will be manly to resent it, but it would be *Godlike* to forgive it."

Forbearing and Forgiving.—Louis XII. of France had many enemies before he ascended the throne. When he became king he caused a list to be made of his persecutors, and marked against each of their names a large black cross. When this became known the enemies of the king fled, because they thought it was a sign that he intended to punish them. But the king hearing of their fears, caused them to be recalled, with an assurance of pardon, and said that he had put a cross beside each name to remind him of the Cross of Christ,

that he might endeavour to follow the example of Him Who had prayed for His murderers: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

FORBEARING AND FORGIVING.—Tasso, being told that he had a fair opportunity of taking advantage of a very bitter enemy replied: "I wish not to plunder him but there are things I wish to take from him—not his honour, his wealth, or his life—but his malice and ill-will."

"BE YE THANKFUL."—There is a very touching little story told of a poor woman with two children, who had not a bed for them to lie upon, and scarcely any clothes to cover them. In the depth of winter they were nearly frozen, and the mother took the door of a cellar off the hinges, and set it up before the corner where they crouched down to sleep, that some of the draught and cold might be kept from them. One of the children whispered to her, when she complained of how badly off they were, "Mother, what do those poor children do who have no cellar-door to put up in front of them?" Even there, you see, the little heart found cause for thankfulness.

Questions on the Epistle

1. To whom is this Epistle written? 2. By whom is it written? 3. What does this passage contain? 4. What does the Apostle say here about forgiveness? 5. What do we learn from the Lord's Prayer about forgiveness? 6. What did Jesus say about the number of times we were to forgive those who had wronged us? 7. What does it say here about charity? 8. What is charity? 9. What did Paul say about charity in his Epistle to the Corinthians? 10. What does it say here about the peace of God? 11. And about the Word of Christ? 12. What advice is given about our every action?

Books of Reference

"Cambridge Bible"; "Century Bible"; Expositor's Bible"; *Godet's* "The Epistles of St Paul"; *Findlay's* "Epistles of the Apostle Paul."

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

The Collect

O GOD, Whose Blessed Son was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil, and make us the sons of God, and heirs of eternal life; Grant us, we beseech Thee, that having this hope, we may purify ourselves, even as He is pure; that when He shall appear again with power and great glory, we may be made like unto Him in His eternal and glorious Kingdom: where with Thee, O Father, and Thee, O Holy Ghost, He liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The Collect appointed for this day was drawn up in A.D. 1661. From the year 1549 to A.D. 1661, the Collect, Epistle, and Gospel appointed for the Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany were appointed for the Sixth Sunday also. Both the Collect and the Gospel for to-day have immediate reference to the final Advent of our Lord, and this is appropriate, because they are more commonly used on the Second Sunday before Advent than on the Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany. (See the Rubric at the end of the Gospel for the *Twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity.*)

If you are an Heir

"*In whom also we have obtained an inheritance.*"—*Eph. i.* 11.

There is always interest in an inheritance. If any of you suddenly discovered that you were an heir, would you not be excited? When someone puts in a claim for a peerage, how it fills the newspapers! I have read lately of a gentleman dying in Australia, worth tens of thousands of pounds; he had left no will; and before the news was many days old, over a thousand people had written to inquire if there was no chance of a share for them. I dare say some of them will have a portion or the whole of it. It will make a great difference to them—let us hope for good.

What if you are an heir? Nay, *you ought to be one!* Read my text again—"In Whom *we*. . ." Stop there. Can't you read your name there? It is in that "we." Paul did not tell you not to read it. He wanted everyone to read it clearly: "We have obtained an inheritance." Are you going to claim it? Jesus Christ purchased it for us; He holds it for us now; we have to obtain it.

If you are an heir, *you must behave like one.* You are some day to come into the full property; therefore you must fit yourself for it. There is a little lad living in this country at present; if God spares him, he is to be some day your king, the ruler of the British Empire. But he must be trained for the high honour; he must fit himself for the throne. What if all of you, boys and girls, were to pray specially for this young prince that when he becomes king he may be a great and good ruler? But remember you, too, are to be

kings unto God. It will never do for a great heir to be mean, or selfish, or ill-tempered, or disobedient. You must live up to the glory of your inheritance. If you are an heir, *the Inheritance is waiting for you.* Should you be poor and lonely, should you be in pain and trouble, let this comfort you, that all the time the inheritance in the light is waiting for you. God does not wish to lose one of you. That is why He gave His only-begotten Son to die for us, so that everyone might be saved. And Jesus said, before going home, that He would prepare a place for us. No one else can have your inheritance. God expects you home to take full possession of it. Will you disappoint your Heavenly Father?

If you are an heir, *you will be taken care of.* Think of the care taken of the prince who is to be king. If he were ill, the best doctors in the land would be ready to help in saving him. Whatever he might wish to learn, he would have the best teacher that could anywhere be found. Are you an heir of God? Then do you think your Father will forget you when you are ill? You have the best Teacher in Heaven to teach you—the Holy Spirit, the Angels' Teacher. However long it may be before you come of age, your Father will provide for you all the way. God is too rich and too kind to let any of His heirs perish or suffer want. All that you may have to bear will only be to fit you for your inheritance.

Don't think your life a poor, miserable thing. Human life is the grandest gift in all the world. But it is very serious. You are to stand one day in the presence of the holy Angels. Have you learnt their manners? Can you sing their song? Has God given you the garment of salvation to put on? You can obtain all these in Jesus Christ. You can have the title-deed of your estate through the Holy Spirit. Yes, God meant *every one of you to be an heir.* The estate is large enough for all. There never can be too many in Heaven. There never can be more kings than there are crowns prepared for them. There can be no harper by the Sea of Glass without a harp. Every other inheritance is too small for all of us; but not this. God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

—Rev. H. E. Lewis.

Heirship

"*If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.*"—*Rom. viii.* 17.

The Bible is the most wonderful of books. It has in it deep things, which the wisest of men may think over for years, and not be able to fathom; and yet it has much that any child can easily understand. This eighth chapter of Romans is one of the deep and difficult places. It requires a clear head, and a mind practised in thinking, even to follow the thread of the Apostle through it. But we can all understand the text. It says, "*If* we are children, *then* we are heirs"; if children, not necessarily in years, but children of God, then we are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."

The first question which we have to ask about this text is, "How can *we* be children of God?"

Here is a ragged boy begging along the street, and a gentleman gives him a penny. He is a kind-hearted man; but do you think there is any chance of his making that beggar boy his son? Not the least. He is walking away quite pleased with himself for being so charitable as to give him a penny.

Here is a carriage rolling past; smart people look out of the windows; they see the beggar boy—they are sorry for him perhaps; but there is still less chance that they will ask him to get into the carriage, rags and tatters and all, and become like one of their children. But here comes a carriage that every-

one stops to look at. In front there are men on horseback, called outriders, all dressed in the royal livery; and here comes the king's state carriage, with its cream-coloured horses! The people stand still as it passes, and the men all raise their hats from their heads. Is there any chance that the king will ask the little ragged boy to come down from the lamp-post, and set him among the princes and princesses of the blood, and make him as one of the royal children? There is *no* chance. And yet there is a King far greater than ours—One Who is higher than the kings of the earth—who is "King of kings, and Lord of lords"—"Who maketh the clouds His chariot, and the swift winds His messengers." This King looks down from Heaven on the children of men, and He says that any of them may become "the children of the Most High."—Ps. lxxxii. 6.

In what way is this strange adoption to be brought about? Jesus, the King's own Son, took on Him man's nature. He clothed Himself with flesh and blood, and in human form He bore man's sins, and on the Cross He suffered death for every man; and, therefore, everyone who now believes in Him, clings to Him, and trusts in Him, becomes a child of God. Let me beseech all of you to try and be children of God. Thank God, there is nothing to *pay* for it; thank God, there is nothing to *do* for it.

Some of you know what it is, when you have been harshly and unkindly treated, when you have been in trouble and danger, to fling yourself, with aching heart and streaming eye, into your mother's arms, and there to feel that you are safe, and sure of comfort. Just so we must try to cast ourselves into the arms of Jesus; and so, trusting, leaning, looking unto Him, we have *that* faith, through which we become altogether children of God. "And if children, then heirs." I suppose most of you know the meaning of this word "heirs." When a rich man dies, one of the first questions asked is this, "Who are his heirs? who gets his money?" And if he has not made a will, then his money goes to his eldest son, or is divided amongst his nearest relations.

There was a beggar died not long ago, in Dundee. He died in the workhouse, as everyone thought, in the deepest poverty; but when his rags were searched, no less than £700 was found hidden among them, for the poor beggar was a miser. "Miser" is just the Latin word for "wretched"; and who is so truly wretched as a man who has money, without the heart to make use of it? When the news of the beggar's hoard spread about, many persons soon came and said they were his relations; and they wished to share his money, though they had taken little enough notice of him so long as they thought he was only a poor tramp. But it was found that the rich beggar had one son, who was in Australia; and therefore all the other relations were put aside; for, if a *child*, then he was the heir. Letters were sent to Australia, to tell the son about his inheritance; but when the letter arrived the son was dead; and so there was a trial in the court of law, to settle who should have the beggar's money.

It is by being nearest kinsmen, or being chosen by the person who owns the property, that anyone becomes an heir of earthly things. It is by being chosen by God, and being His children that we become "heirs," or "inheritors" (another form of the same word) "of the Kingdom of Heaven." This is what marks an inheritance from any other kind of property.

They are not heirs who get anything by *buying* it. There was a Jewish king who had set his heart on making a garden of herbs in a plot of ground that belonged to a neighbour of his. So the king said to him, "I will give thee for it a better vineyard; or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money." And Naboth said to Ahab, "The Lord forbid it me,

that I should give the *inheritance* of my fathers to thee."—1 Kings xxi. 3. Naboth clung to his vineyard, because it had been left him by his father. With Ahab's money in his hand, he might have bought a better vineyard; but he could not have bought an *inheritance* for himself.

They are not heirs who get anything by *serving*. When Jacob, by six years' hard service as a shepherd, had earned the flocks and cattle of Laban, they were justly his *property*, but they were not his *inheritance*. They were the inheritance of Leah and Rachel, Laban's daughters; and so they said to Jacob, in complaining of their father's treatment of them, "Is there yet any portion or *inheritance* for *us* in our father's house?"—Gen. xxxi. 14.

They are not heirs who get anything by *fighting*. When the children of Israel marched into the land of Canaan, and took possession of it, they could not be said to *inherit* it; but to their children, and their children's children, it became "the lot of their inheritance."

It is not, then, by *paying*, or *serving, or fighting*, that we become heirs, but by being children: "If *children, then heirs.*" Heirs of whom?

There were many who wished to be heirs of the Dundee beggar, because he had £700. No one cares to be the heir of a poor man; but the more anyone has, the more eager people are to be his heirs. But who is so rich as God? for He "maketh poor, and maketh rich; He bringeth low, and lifteth up; He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and make them inherit the throne of glory."—1 Sam. ii. 8. And of this God, if we are *children*, then we are heirs."

And what a heritage is this that He has for us—"everlasting life in Heaven!" We hear these words so often, that they carry little meaning to our minds. We shall see most of their deep meaning, if we show some things in which this inheritance of the saints will differ from our present state.

St Peter tells us that this inheritance is "incorruptible, and undefiled, and fadeth not away."—1 Pet. i. 4. Here, everything is more or less corruptible. There is a worm in every rose-bud, a flaw in every joy; but in Heaven there is no seed of corruption, no inlet for decay. Here, everything is more or less defiled. Sin, and sorrow, and sickness soon stain the happiest lot; but there, "nothing that defileth" can enter; sin can find no place in "the new Heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Here, everything is fading away. Look back only a few months or weeks, and how many things *within* us have faded away from each of us—hopes and fears, plans and prospects, that filled our whole minds a few weeks ago—where are they now? Something has happened that we did not expect, and they have all passed away as the morning cloud or the early dew. Yes, and things *without* us have faded away. Children or parents, friends or neighbours—they have faded away, and been quietly laid beneath the green sod, soon to be forgotten, save by one or two faithful hearts. But in the Heaven of God, there is no fading away. There, there is to be no more change, no more death!

Oh, even from these things we may surely learn that it is a precious and glorious inheritance that God has in store for His children. But the next words of the text raise it far above our understanding; we are not only to be heirs of God, but "*joint-heirs with Christ.*" Christ is the King's own Son; from all eternity He has been with the Father-God; and yet to every one of His children, God says that He will make them "joint-heirs with Christ." Man grudges and quarrels with his fellow-man, with his own kindred, about a share of paltry yellow dust; God, in Christ, freely offers, even to those who have been rebels and enemies, a share of Heavenly bliss and glory. Would you like to know how rich Christ is, whose heritage God's children share?

Christ himself tells us, "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given ALL THINGS into His hand."—John iii. 35. And again He says, "All things that the Father hath are Mine."—John xvi. 15. How can we lay hold of such a thought as this? That the outcast child that wanders through the cold streets at night, friendless, homeless, starving, and lifts its languid eye to the stars in the blue vault above, and seems to see in them the loving eye of that Jesus of Whom it has heard in happier days gone by, and then lies down to sleep and die upon a doorstep—what a thought it is, that the soul of such a child goes up, from its rags and nakedness, from its poor wasted skin and bone, straight up to be joint-heir with Christ, "the King of Glory."

But though the thought is too high for our grasp, there is no doubt of its truth. God Himself, in the Revelations (xxi. 7), spake to St John the selfsame fact—"He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be My son."

Now, before we can be heirs of anyone, *that person* must die; but before we can be heirs of God [in full possession] *we* must die. It is through the grave and gate of death that we must enter on the inheritance; the dark tomb is the only gate into the land of glorious light.

A boy was walking with his father one fine morning, and he asked that they might go to the top of the hill, which he saw in the distance before them, and gaze over the country far and wide. His father said "Yes," and they went on, the boy bounding in front in high glee. But the way was long, the sun was hot, and there were no trees to shade them from its scorching beams. The road became rougher and rougher; and as they came to a winding part of it, they lost sight of the hill altogether. Then the boy's patience and courage failed; he sat down and began to cry, and complained bitterly that his father was not leading him by the right way—that, instead of guiding him to the bright and sunny hill, he was keeping him in the hot and dusty road, where all was dull and dreary. "My child," said the father, gently, "this is the *way to the hill*; you can't get there unless you travel along this path."

The conduct of those who are travelling to God's hill, is often just like the conduct of this little boy. They thought that the way would be smooth and easy—they find it is difficult, and sometimes painful, and so they are ready to murmur. But there is no other way, even for children, than this that passes through the grave. But what child is afraid in the dark, when he has hold of his father's or his grown-up brother's strong and loving arm? And so no child need fear, who clings to Jesus as his elder Brother, and walks on simply and trustingly to that God Whom he sees revealed in the face of Jesus Christ. The road may be rough, but he heeds it not, for it is the road to glory.

Dear children, you are none of you too young to enter on this road; they get on the best who begin the soonest.

And there is nothing of gloom in God. It is a libel and a lie to say so. Listen to the birds—God's birds; is there any gloom in their notes of ringing gladness? Look at the flowers—God's flowers; do not they breathe joy as well as beauty?

And if there be no gloom in God, there should be nothing gloomy in living near Him; and if we could always live near Him, there would be none. The sorrow is, because we so often lose hold of God's hand ourselves, and because we see so many madly dashing God's kind hand away from them.

But, even if it were *all* gloom, surely we would be wise to endure heaviness for a night, when we know how great the joy is that cometh in the morning.

What more can God offer us, than to be joint-heirs with His own Son?

Don't let us lose the Heavenly heritage by delay. Don't count on youth and strength.—*Rev. J. E. Clarke, M.A.*

Anecdotes and Illustrations

A Snake in the Nest.—A gentleman, while enjoying a country ramble one day, was attracted by a strange cry of a bird in a tree at a short distance from him. Distress was undoubtedly the burden of that piercing wail; of that he was assured, and he humanely went with promptitude to the succour of the poor creature. Under the tree a tiny stream was running in its shallow bed, and the gentleman saw lying amid its fringe of fern and flowerets a young fledgling, helpless and hurt, but not dead. With gentle fingers he picked it up, and dried it with his handkerchief. Still the cry of the parent bird rent the air, but the gentleman hoped to make him happy by restoring the young one, injured and drooping though it was, to the reviving warmth of the nest overhead, from which it had evidently fallen. With a trifling effort he reached the pretty nest, and, as he did so, an ugly snake coiled itself out, leaving death and sorrow behind it. The mother bird had nearly expired, two little ones were quite dead, and the third, so kindly restored, had not many minutes to live. Well might the father bird lament so loudly, so piteously. Here was a joyous home in the midst of peace and beauty made desolate in a few short minutes by an evil invader, a deadly snake. Poor bird, bereft of gentle mate, and joyous young ones, in his misery he destroyed the nest, which he could call his home no more, and went we know not where. And in our own homes, dear children, sins, like serpents, creep in, and if left unheeded and unslain, they will prove as deadly, and as horrible, nay, infinitely more so, than this snake in the bird's nest. Be watchful unto prayer; Heaven alone can give us wisdom and grace to be on our guard against the serpent in our home; Heaven alone can give us strength to destroy it, should it, by some sad chance, have gained access there.

The Boy and the Bee.—Little Johnny was just three years old. Of course, he had seen very little of the world, and had very much to learn. So one warm bright afternoon, while playing in the garden, he took a lesson which he remembers yet. In the rich green grass a bright yellow dandelion caught his eye, but he did not notice a singular-looking spot about the middle of the flower. That spot was nothing less than a merry honey-bee, who had come singing along through the air in search of honey and wax, and stopped to see if that flower had any for him. Quick as thought, down went the little fat hand, and back again it came as quickly, bringing in its grasp flower, bee, and all. The poor bee was very much surprised at this sudden change. He thought that the sky or something else had fallen on him. But, whatever might have been the case, he was resolved not to give up his life without a trial, and so, twisting his little body around, he sent up his sharp poisoned sting deep into Johnny's hand! And didn't nurse hear a scream from Johnny's lungs! And, while she ran to aid the suffering child, the bee gathered himself up and set out for home, wondering what in the world such little two-legged pests as boys were made for. But the sting had not only marked Johnny's hand, but had written this lesson in his memory: that sometimes *very pretty things have very sharp stings.*

A Trap for Boys.—A lad was approached by one of those demon's agents of that which deprives men of their property and destroys both body and soul, who solicited him to come into his place of destruction and take a glass of lemonade. The boy hesitated, but on being assured that he would get nothing but a glass of nice, sweet lemonade, he was induced to go in.

Sure enough, he was offered and partook of what had been promised him, and nothing more. This was repeated several times, till at length, the trap having been set, it was now time to spring it. Accordingly, the barman began his fiendish work by dropping into the glass of lemonade one drop of strong liquor, increasing it thus perceptibly to form in the lad a taste for it. As the boy never paid for these drinks, one of his old customers of the place asked the landlord why he so favoured the boy. He replied by pointing and saying: "Do you see that fine mansion upon the hill yonder? That belongs to the boy's father, and will probably soon belong to him, and then in turn it may belong to me."

Questions on the Collect

1. Whom do we address in this Collect? 2. For what three purposes does the Collect say Christ was manifested? 3. What is meant by "manifested"? 4. What does the Collect teach us to ask that we may do? 5. What promise is held out to the pure in heart? 6. How does the Collect say Jesus will appear? 7. Did Jesus Himself declare He would so appear? 8. How many persons of the Trinity are mentioned in this Collect? 9. Quote the words in which each person is mentioned.

The Gospel

St Matthew xxiv. 23-31.

Prepare to meet Thy God

"Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."—Amos iv. 12.

The verses that go before contain a sad complaint by God against the people of Israel. They describe the sins of the nation, and their refusal to be reclaimed by many corrections. God tells them, therefore, that He will soon visit them with severe judgments, and bids them prepare to meet Him when He comes to punish them. The words, you see, then, are a threatening of near wrath; yet the utterance of that threatening beforehand is in much mercy. Now, God has revealed to us all a time of coming judgment —of His meeting with us to try us—and in like manner He calls on us in loving kindness to be prepared for it.

I dare say, young friends, that a meeting with God has to your mind a sound of what is awful about it. Our hearts naturally are afraid to go near to God. Why is it so? Why is a child that has disobeyed his parent in his absence afraid of that parent's return at eventide? Why does he think the afternoon hours are posting very fast away? Why is a scholar who has committed some offence against rule afraid to meet the teacher's eye? Why is a servant who has been unfaithful to his master afraid to be called to give account of his stewardship? Why is a man, hiding from the officers of justice for some crime against the law, ready to start at every knock which comes to the door of the house where he is staying? Why does a criminal in prison dread the bar, and the judge, and the assize-day? To all these questions the answer is the same. Sin leads in fear. It is this which makes us shrink from meeting the eye of God. To get quit of the misery of this fear, many strive to forget it. They plunge into business, or gaiety, or more

sin. But that is madness. How would it fare with a man who tried to quench thirst by falling asleep, or drinking draughts of brine? The sleep would not moisten his parched throat, and the salt sea-wave after momentary feeling of relief would make his agony greater. The text tells us what is the path of wisdom in regard to our future meeting with God. It directs us to think of it, and prepare for it.

In talking with you further about this solemn text I shall endeavour to show you—I. WHY WE SHOULD PREPARE TO MEET GOD. II. HOW WE SHOULD PREPARE TO MEET GOD.

I. WHY.—There are four reasons I shall give: 1. We cannot avoid meeting Him. Sinners would fain escape meeting with God if they could. Gehazi, when he had gone after Naaman, and told him lies to get money, did not like when Elisha called him into his presence. Adam tried to get out of God's way, when he heard Him walking in the garden, after the fall. But he had to come out from behind the trees, and answer God's questions. Neither can we avoid appearing before God. We cannot avoid dying. Now, death leads the soul directly to God. We must all appear also before the judgment seat of Christ. No one will be allowed to be absent from the great gathering of the last day. The wicked would fain be still in their graves that day, if Jesus' power would let them. But no one of them all is strong enough to resist His power, and none of them all is too insignificant to be overlooked. The cry from many lips then will be, "Fall on us ye rocks, and ye mountains, and hide us from the face of the Lamb"; but it will be of no use. There is a passage in the last chapter of this Book of Amos that very strikingly teaches how impossible it is for God's enemies to escape being brought before Him. He there says: "Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to Heaven, thence will I bring them down: and though they hide themselves on the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from My sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent and he shall bite them." 2. We cannot excuse ourselves for our sins in God's presence. Adam tried excuses. So did Eve. So we are all very apt to do. Have not you often, when challenged for a fault, felt apologies rising to your lips? Someone led you to do it, or you could not help it, or you did not intend it, or something of that sort. Now, excuses sometimes pass with men; but God sifts them. It will not be enough before God to show that we were tempted. For the very fault is that we did not resist. That frequent excuse, "I could not help it," will not stand in God's presence. It does not stand, indeed, before our own conscience. Did you say something like that the other day? Then you know you did not quite mean that. You meant simply that you were too indolent, or careless to help it. In short, you would not. You were led away by some wrong feeling to do otherwise. All excuses come in the end to this, it was my liking. I was too forgetful or too bent on gratification, to say No to that. Till you can quite clear yourselves before your consciences you need not dream of putting off God with excuses. No; nor even then, for God is greater than our hearts, and knows things against us which we overlook, and sees hollowness in our excuses which we do not discover. 3. We cannot resist God's power when He will punish us for sin. See what follows in the next verse, and say, can you contend with Him "that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, the Lord, the God of hosts, is His name?" You remember the story of King Canute—how to reprove the flattery of his courtiers he made them

place his chair one day within tide-mark, as the sea was rising. Then commanding the waves to keep back, nor dare to touch the feet of royalty, he let his followers see, as the waters swelled up all the same, how powerless he was against the Great King, Who bade the sea ebb and flow at His pleasure. What would become of you if you were to try your arm's strength against a thunderbolt, or to rush on to meet a railway train in full career? But what are those things—sea, lightning, force of steam—to the power of the Great God? In God's hand, you cannot struggle out of it. You remember how it fared with Jonah when he "rose up to flee from the presence of the Lord." I remember a good man telling me that he once saw a prisoner condemned to die; and when, after the sentence, he saw the poor man led away by the officers of justice back to the convict-cell, helpless against the might of human law, to wait his doom, he felt what an awful thing it would be to be condemned of God, and removed out of His sight. 4. We cannot, when called to meet God, sue then to get pardon. You think, perhaps, you will cry for mercy when the Judgment Day comes. And it is a blessed thing that there is abundant mercy for sinners. Nor is there a prayer God likes better to hear than that of the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" But it must be presented at the proper time. The Judgment Day is not for mercy, but justcie. We must then be dealt with according to our works. On earth a condemned criminal is sometimes pardoned afterwards. But human administration of law, as well as human law, is imperfect; and it becomes sinful men rather to err in showing mercy than in punishing. God Himself offers pardon to the condemned criminal while he is in this world. But if the offer be not accepted, then judgment takes the place of mercy, and Divine pity itself tells us of no hope of pardon beyond the grave. Surely these taken together make reasons cogent enough for obeying the word of our text. Let me now tell you—

II. How We should Prepare to Meet God.—In general, we are to prepare to meet God hereafter by going to Him, and having a meeting now. If we seek Him in Christ at present, if we go to Him as our Father, we need have no fear to meet Him as our Judge. He will then Himself undertake and plead our case. But to help you I will break down this general precept into several directions included in it. I would say, then—1. Meet God, confessing your sins. How did the prodigal son in the parable do? He said to himself, I will arise and go to my father, and say, I have sinned; and he arose and did so. When you have done anything against the will of your parents, which is best, think you—trying to hide the fault, or going humbly to own it? If you got a thorn in your hand, would you act wisely to let it remain and fester; or would it be better to have it taken out at once? When a little child falls and is wounded, how readily the bleeding hand or lip will be shown to the mother's eye! So it is best to go to God, and show our sin-wounds. We must not think, indeed, that if we only confess, we may go on sinning as often as we please. But when we do sin, let us go at once, and with openness and true sorrow, say, Father, we have sinned. God asks us to confess our sins. And He promises if we do confess to forgive us. Here is a beautiful text to that effect, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." You recollect how Jesus teaches God's willingness to forgive in the parable of the Prodigal Son, when he tells us that the father, while his son "was yet a great way off, saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." You may learn also how ready God is to forgive, on confession being made, by reading David's experience in the Thirty-second

Psalm. This is his account of his own case, "I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." 2. Meet God pleading for mercy. I have already cited the publican's prayer. You remember it fits us all. David's prayer was quite like it, when he had sinned, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." It is the right thing, here and now, to call for mercy. And we need have nothing to do with justice at present, except to believe it satisfied by what Jesus did and suffered. Call for mercy, believingly. Do not doubt that there is forgiveness with God. No matter how many and how bad your sins be, God is ready to blot them out. There is a text that says He delights in mercy. It gives Him pleasure to show it. He would far rather spare us than strike us. You understand that you are to ask and expect mercy, for Jesus' sake. Use His name as your plea. Use Him as your pleader. The mercy-seat of old was sprinkled with blood. We get mercy now by Christ's Cross. If you will not go to God in Christ, you cannot meet Him in mercy even now. But "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." 3. Meet God, keeping up communion with Him. A man forgiven is secure against God's anger. But he is not yet ready for meeting God as he will see Him on the Throne and in Heaven. He must be made holy too. God provides for this. The Spirit comes and cleanses the heart. He can do this very quickly. He did it very quickly in the dying thief. But He generally takes longer time. He uses means in doing it. He uses truth. He leads us to use it. You will find, children, that what we constantly think about with pleasure, we come to resemble. If it is bad, it blackens us; if good, it betters us. You will be just what your thoughts most converse about. Meet, then, with God often in your thoughts, and you will be like Him. The means of meeting with God in our thoughts are prayer, praise, reading, and hearing the word. Pray as if you were near and talking with God. Read the Bible as if He were near, speaking to you. Read it as a sailor studies his chart at sea, to find out where the rocks lie, and the currents, and the shoals, that he may steer the ship safely through. When I go out to make calls in this great city, I very often study the map first to make sure of my way to the places I wish to reach. If I had got directions in a letter from a friend how to transact for him a piece of business, I would be careful, in referring to the letter, to take pains to understand it, and then to act according to what was written. When you are giving medicine to a sick friend you are heedful to keep the physician's prescription under your eye, and to follow it. The Bible should be looked at with like practical ends in view; to find out our dangers, to discover the right way, to know our absent Saviour's will, and to be healed by its medicine for souls. When you go to church also, go to meet God. Go to hear, not the minister so much as what God will say to you by him. Those who see God oftenest, and with greatest joy in Zion below, are readiest to meet Him in the Zion above. 4. Prepare to meet God, doing His will. Prayer, reading, and coming to church are means of grace—helps to holiness. Now, the grand preparation for meeting God is being made like Him. When people prepare for going to church, they wash themselves and put on clean garments. They have a good emblem in that of what prepares a soul for meeting God. When the people went out to meet Jesus on the day of His riding into Jerusalem, they carried branches of palms, and strewed His way with leaves and garments. When the king visits distant parts of his empire, the

people prepare crowns and wreaths of flowers, and archways of evergreen, and other decorations to meet his eye. When the bridegroom was coming in ancient wedding-processions, the virgins expecting his arrival trimmed their lamps and went forth to meet him. Let us get ready to meet Jesus with sweet flowers of right feeling, and evergreens of good works, and clear lights of shining graces. Good works are of no use to get pardon, for pardon in its very nature is free. But good works prove pardon, and they prepare for the Kingdom. For the Kingdom is a Kingdom of good working. Whatever country of the world I go to, I must, in order to be at home there, know its language and live according to its climate. It would not do to wear furs, and speak the tongue of the Greenlanders out in Dahomey or Old Calabar. So I must get the language of Heaven, and have its habits learned, to be fit to go there. Being in Christ makes death safe, being near Him and like Him makes death happy.

All these advices come to this—meet with God now. God Himself alone can make you ready for meeting Him hereafter. Do not put off. You need not seek any other hour, or any other place than the present. Prepare to meet your God. This is the voice all Scripture and Providence are raising to us. Sabbaths say it. New moons say it. Winters and summers preach it. Sermons say it. Conscience says it. Oh, hear the voice and live!—*Rev. J. Edmond, D.D.*

The Blowing of the Great Trumpet

"The great trumpet shall be blown."—Isa. xxvii. 13.

Those here spoken of are the Jews. They had so forsaken God and sinned against Him, that He had allowed them to be carried captive into Assyria and Egypt and other countries, where they were despised and oppressed and down-trodden. The text tells of a good time coming, when they should be brought back from the lands into which they had been driven—when, having given up their idol-worship, they should once more be God's dear people. The promise was so far fulfilled, when Cyrus the King of Persia and other kings gave them leave to return to their own land, to rebuild their city and their Temple, an account of which you have in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

But that was nothing to what shall yet be. A far better, fuller, and more glorious accomplishment of the promise yet remains, with which we may and should have something to do. That is what I am now to speak about; and though it is the Jews who are specially concerned, we shall look at the text as applying to heathens as well as Jews, even to all who are ignorant of and are rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour. With regard to these, there are three things to be looked at—1. Their urgent need. 2. The help wanted. 3. The success promised. Or take the three words—Need—Help—Success.

I. Need.—The urgent need of countless thousands, both Jews and Gentiles. They are described as "ready to perish." The word is literally "lost." The idea is that of a lost sheep. When a sheep has gone astray—when it has broken loose from the fold and the shepherd—it has not the wit to find its way back; it has not the power to provide for itself, or defend itself. It may starve for want of food, or die of cold, or fall over some precipice and be killed, or be devoured by some beast of prey. Is it not "ready to perish"? Or the idea is that of a lost child, who has left his home and wandered into the fields, or into the woods, and been overtaken by night and darkness. There is no one to care for him, no one to guide

him, no one to shelter him. He is left to himself. A hundred things may happen that may be death to him. Without knowing it, he may be on the point of falling over a precipice or into a river. He is "ready to perish."

Now a child or a man, who has gone astray from God, who is wandering from the Good Shepherd and His fold, is "ready to perish" too. Not to speak of the Jews or the heathen far away, this describes many among ourselves. I have no doubt it describes some of you. All who are still unpardoned, unconverted, unsaved, are lost—are "ready to perish." It is not long since a terrible railway accident occurred. The express train to London was flying along at the rate of forty miles an hour, when it ran into a coal-truck and was thrown off the line. There lay the passengers, old and young, buried under broken railway carriages, and held so fast that they could not get out, some with broken limbs, so that they could not help themselves, some benumbed with cold, and some lying on the other line of rails, on which another train might come upon them at any moment and crush them to death. They were not dead, but they were "ready to perish."

One winter, when a snowstorm came on suddenly, a flock of sixty sheep disappeared. They were nowhere to be seen. At length those who were in search of them were guided to a hollow, where they discovered the heads of two sheep above the snow. All the rest were completely covered over. They were not dead, but they were dying—"ready to perish"; and had they not been speedily rescued, their dead bodies would have been dug out next morning, or would not have been discovered until the thaw came three weeks after. In all these cases there was urgent need.

And still more is it true of everyone who is not a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ—he is "ready to perish."

It is true, alas! of many even in this highly favoured land of ours. In our large cities and towns and villages, and even in country districts, how many are without the knowledge of God, living in sin and misery, and going down to a hopeless grave! Think of one-fifth of all the people in this country being what we call "home-heathens!" Think of the multitudes of little children who live in ungodly homes, where they have a bad example and evil influences of every kind—where they see and hear so much that is evil—with none of the helps which you have, and many hindrances which you know nothing about! What chance have they of doing well? How can you think or speak of them, but as "ready to perish," and sorely needing help?

It is true of the Jews. Many of them are very rich. Some of them are the richest men in the world. Many of them are very clever. Some of the ablest doctors, and professors, and merchants, and bankers, and musicians, and editors of newspapers are Jews. Many of them are outwardly well-behaved, affectionate, kind to the poor. But they do not believe in the Lord Jesus. They reject Him as the Messiah and Saviour. Most of them hate the very name of "Jesus of Nazareth." All that some of them know about Christians is, that they despise Jews, and abuse them, and persecute them. They point to bad Christians around them—to drunken Christians—dishonest Christians—lying Christians—immoral Christians, and they ask, "Would you have us to be like these?" They do not know the New Testament. Most of them never read it. Many of them never saw it. Jesus said, "I am the Door," but they will not enter the Kingdom by Him. He said, "I am the Way," but they will not have Him, and so they are "out of the way." He said, "I am the Light of the World," but they shut their eyes and will not look, and so are in darkness. He said, "I am the Good Shepherd," but they will have nothing to do with Him, and so are

"lost sheep"—the "lost sheep of the house of Israel," just as they were long ago. He says, "I am the Bread of Life," but they will not taste it, and nothing else can take its place. They reject Christ now as really and as much as those who cried, "Away with Him! Away with Him! Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" And there is no other Saviour. "There is no other name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." They are like the passengers in a sinking ship, out in a stormy sea, who will not go on board the only vessel that is within fifty miles of them. They are "ready to perish."

They are to be found in every land. They are scattered over the four continents—Europe, Asia, Africa, and America. They have been called "the unnumbered nation," but there are supposed to be about eight millions of them. As "without Christ," they are "ready to perish." I may, therefore, well speak of the need—the urgent need of the Jews!

And what shall I say of the heathen—pagans—idolators—who worship false gods—idols of silver, or gold, or brass, or wood, or stone, which their own hands have made? Millions of gods! some so small that they can be carried in the waistcoat pocket—some huge and unsightly, so that you would be crushed under the wheels of the cars that bear them along—monsters to look at, and, in the characters which their worshippers give them, the embodiment of cruelty and of wickedness.

Look at our own India with its 300 millions—its gods almost as numerous as its people, and these, for the most part, ignorant, superstitious, and degraded! Think of what heathenism has done and is doing for the daughters of India, described by one of their own nation as "unwelcomed at their birth, untaught in childhood, enslaved when married, accursed as widows, and unlamented when they die!" Who shall describe the misery of Hindu widows, of whom there are millions—many of them mere children? Think of such a one married in early childhood to a husband whom she scarcely ever saw, and who may have fifty wives besides! When she becomes a widow, hear the following description of her:

"She is now a widow for life, and we all know what that means. She is henceforward held as one forsaken of God and man, and fit only to die. British law has done this for her, that she cannot now be burnt on the funeral pile with her husband's dead body; but I am not sure that this is not the more merciful fate—the real rather than the lifelong death. She is stripped of her good clothes and jewels; her hair is cut off; she must sleep not now in a bed, but on a mat on the floor. She must eat only one meal in the day, and that of the coarsest food, and by herself, not with the family. She must fast often, besides; and while this lasts she must not drink a drop of water, even though she should be dying. She must do the meanest work of the house, and be the servant and drudge of everyone. And, worse than this, henceforth no love or sympathy can come into her life. No one must say a kind word to her, or even give her a pitying look; for their superstitions tell these women that, if they are kind to the despised widow, they will probably be visited by a like calamity themselves."—"The Zenanas of Bengal," by *Mrs Murray Mitchell.*

Look at China, with its 400 millions of people, in spite of all its boasted civilisation, so dark. To speak of nothing else, see how lightly infant-life is valued. In one city, we are told, as many as twenty-four female infants will be thrown into the streets in one night—thousands in the course of a year—to be devoured by dogs or swine, or to be carted away in the morning, living or dead, as rubbish to some place for refuse. Hear a mother who had murdered her female infants justifying it on the ground that, had they

been spared, it would have been a life of unbroken misery, and ending by saying, "Would to God my mother had put me under the ground the moment I was born!"

Look at Africa, so long known as "the Dark Continent," selling thousands of its people to be slaves, setting no value on human life, putting thousands to death when some great man dies, and hundreds in the case of people of less note. Look at the islands of the sea, some of them still in a state of cannibalism, the people killing and devouring each other. It is terrible to think of the present state of things—no Sabbath, no Bible, no Saviour, none to tell them the way of salvation, none to care for their souls. I cannot draw a sadder picture of the state of the heathen than Paul has drawn in the Epistle to the Romans (iii. 13-18): "Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit: the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways; And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes." What a picture this is, of their present condition; and then to think of the coming eternity—that is darkest of all! Are they not, in saddest sense, "ready to perish?"

II. Help.—The help wanted. What is to be done to meet this terrible state of things? We have been looking at a dying world—a perishing world. If it were a dying man—a perishing child—we should ask, Is there anything that will save the dying one—any medicine or food—anything we can give—anything we can do? And that should be our question about the perishing millions all over the world.

Our text says: "The great trumpet shall be blown." Long ago, the people of Israel were called by the sound of the trumpet to take part in the worship of God. Every fiftieth year was the Jubilee, when people were freed from their debts, and property returned to its original owners, and slaves were set free, and the whole land had rest. It was a gladsome time, and was introduced by the sounding of the trumpet, which was as the voice of God to the people calling them to come and worship—to come and enjoy the privileges He had prepared for them.

The sounding of the trumpet may be regarded as typical of the preaching of the Gospel, by which both the outcasts of Israel and the "ready to die" of all nations are to be saved. This is the help needed—the help provided by God, for ourselves and for others—the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which tells of the atonement made by Him—of the shedding of His precious blood for sinners. This is God's only way of saving Jew or Gentile. And the making known of this Gospel—this gracious offer of mercy—is "the blowing of the great trumpet," which shall save the outcast and those ready to die.

But there must be someone to sound the trumpet. It cannot sound of itself. It must be "blown." And who are to do this, but those who have heard it and complied with its call themselves, and who, with hearts full of love and thankfulness, can sing, "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound!" We are to blow the trumpet. God lays this upon us. If we have got any good from the Gospel ourselves, we are bound to make it known to others. It is as much our duty to blow the trumpet as to hear it. We must do it, or disobey our Master. He says, "Go ye and teach all nations." He says, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." He says, "The field is the world." It is quite true we should "begin at home," as some people tell us—with those nearest to us—at our door—in our own home—with those whom we can reach ourselves.

But we must not stop there. If others had done that, we should never have had the Gospel—the sound of the great trumpet would never have fallen upon our ear. We should still have been barbarians and savages like our ancestors. But that others had cared for those who were far away, and sounded the great trumpet for them, we had been uncared-for heathen, with cruel and bloody customs, our children sacrificed to false gods, "ready to perish" indeed.

How, then, are we to blow the trumpet? What can we do to help? None of us are too young or feeble to sound the trumpet ourselves. In our own way we can tell the story of redeeming love. We have something to do personally. Most of us like to take some active part in rescuing those who are in danger. If a child were lost, we should like to take some part in seeking him. If a house were burning, we should like to help to work the fire-engine, or to take some other part in putting out the fire. If someone were drowning, we should like to carry the rope or plank that might save him, or if we could swim, to plunge into the water and bring him to shore. And so should it be here. Could we not gently and humbly tell the "old, old story" to someone, and seek to win that soul for Jesus? And where we cannot ourselves go to the Jews or the heathen, we must get others to go for us and blow the Gospel trumpet in our stead. We can send Bibles and other books to make known the way of salvation. We can send missionaries and teachers, and help these after they have gone.

The best that any of you can give, is yourselves. He gives by far the largest contribution who gives himself. Gold and silver are nothing in comparison. Many years ago, a minister in London, the late Dr Waugh, preached from our text. Before he closed, he looked round the congregation and asked, "Is there in this congregation one young disciple of the Lord Jesus who has love enough in his heart to his Master to say, 'Lord, here am I, send me'?" There was one who said, "Lord, I will go"—one who afterwards, in India and Russia, did good service for Christ. I refer to Richard Knill, whose memoir I would have you all to read. I cannot but hope that there are some now among you whose hearts shall be fired with missionary zeal, and who shall yet wear a crown of many stars in glory.

But when you cannot give yourselves, you can do something by giving your money. What have you been giving, that the great trumpet may be blown among the nations of the earth? There are wonderful openings among the sons and daughters of India, who are our own fellow-subjects. They are eager to be taught. Many of them delight to learn. What have you done to help them? Africa is opening up to the Gospel. What have you done for it? China is open, in a way that, a few years ago, could not have been thought possible. Madagascar is stretching her hands across the sea, and pleadingly saying, "Come over and help us." Not long since, a missionary in that interesting island wrote to me, that some men had come from afar to ask a missionary or teacher, but there was none to give them. They said they would return in six months, to see if there should be anyone then. But there was no likelihood of their getting what they sought. Italy and Spain are open, after the door had been closed for many generations. All these desire and need help. What have you done for any of these lands and peoples? Most of you have some money that you can call your own, and I believe that everyone should give something for this great cause, that is so dear to the heart of Christ. If all were to give in the same proportion as you do, how long would it take to "preach the Gospel to every creature"?

I have been disappointed by the little interest shown by many young

people, and the little they do for this part of the work of Christ. In the case of many children, one never hears of their giving at all. One seldom hears of their making sacrifices in order to be able to give. Many spend all they have upon themselves, so that they have nothing left for Christ and for the perishing. It would be a joy to think that the interest in the missionary cause was so great, that there was not a single individual connected with any Christian congregation in the land, who did not help on Christ's work in the world, by some personal gift.

You might do much by your interest and sympathy and prayers. If you were to read and inquire and pray about God's work in the world, I am sure you would do something to help it on. The links in the chain are—information—interest—sympathy—prayer—effort. What part of the mission-field do you take a special interest in and pray for? What is your favourite missionary object, which you think much about and make sacrifices for, as you do for other favourite things?

Perhaps someone asks, "Do they want help? Will they take it? Will they listen to the great trumpet, although it were sounded in their ear? Are not missions to Jews and heathens and Mohammedans hopeless? They don't want them; they won't have them." But does it not only make the case the stronger, if they do not know their need and their danger, and do not ask for help? Perhaps, in some cases, they refuse help when it is offered. And what of that?

As I pass along the banks of a stream, I see something in a pool. On going nearer, I see it is the body of a boy floating in the water. There is no cry for help, there is no outstretched hand. He is past all that. Am I, on that account, not to give help? Is not the call all the louder and more urgent? The fact that the drowning boy is past seeking or welcoming help, gives him a stronger claim, and calls forth earnest effort on his behalf all the more. Silence, in such a case, pleads more touchingly than any words could. And does not the silence of a perishing world touchingly plead—"Come over and help us!"

III. Success.—The success promised. "They which were ready to perish shall come." It may seem a very dark picture which I have drawn, under the head—*Need*. But the text tells of a brighter future—first for Israel, and then for the world. Any fulfilment of the promise that has already been is nothing in comparison of what shall yet be. The return from the Jewish captivity was wonderful, in its own way; but more and better is in store, for "all Israel shall be saved."

Already, many Jews and Jewesses have been converted to Christ—some in early life, and others in old age—some in a humble position, and others among the learned and those of the best families. Many of the brightest jewels in the crown of Christ, from Paul downwards, have been won from the ranks of Judaism, and we have reason to believe that converted Israel will have a great part in Evangelising the world (see Micah v. 7; Rom. xi. 12, 15).

And as regards the heathen world, the history of the progress of the Gospel, in recent times, reads almost like a chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. Converts have been won, and churches full of promise have been raised up in India and China and Japan and Africa. The island which Captain Cook named Savage Island, on account of the ferocity of the natives, has changed its name to Ninue. Its peace-loving people set an example of forbearance under provocation, to countries that have long been called Christian, and they love and hallow the Lord's Day in a way which we seldom see at home. The Fiji Islands have undergone such a change, that

a recent Governor spoke of them as an honour to the Christian religion, which had done so much for them; and others have told how, at the hour for evening worship, the voice of praise and prayer might be heard coming from the homes of the people there, as among the godly peasantry of our own land, in its best days. Dr Geddie, a missionary in the New Hebrides, tells that when he went to the Island of Aneityum there was not a single Christian, and when he left it there was not a single heathen. Madagascar, in which, under a cruel heathen queen, persecution raged for long more fiercely than in almost any other land, has become one of the most remarkable trophies of the power of the Gospel, and in very trying circumstances has compelled the respect of Christendom. Among the snowy regions of Labrador, the Moravian brethren have, after long waiting and much self-denying labour, had the joy of gathering at least the firstfruits of a coming harvest. Away in Persia and the far East, American missionaries have made known the Gospel, and in Egypt and in many other lands they have gathered the children into Christian schools, and the people into churches, and have seen interest awakened and surrender made of heart and life to Christ. Since the earlier labours of Carey and other missionary pioneers in India—of Robert and Mary Moffat and David Livingstone in South Africa—and of John Williams in the South Sea Islands—there have been wonderful changes for the better. Africaner, the "African lion," has become the lamb. The most unpromising people have had their whole character and habits changed. They have become honest, truthful, and industrious, and are giving liberally money, arrowroot, cocoa-nuts, palm oil, or whatever they have, to send the Gospel to others. Many of them have gone forth as missionaries, to their fellow-countrymen, and to other tribes or other islands, and in many cases have laid down their lives for Christ and the Gospel's sake. In all these ways, there has been wonderful success.

And yet it must be owned that anything like a complete fulfilment of the promise is still a thing of the future. All that has been done is small indeed, as compared with what there is still to do. I suppose the number of heathens in the world to-day is greater than it was when our Lord gave His parting charge, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." We are told that the number of children born into the heathen world every year greatly exceeds the number of persons brought out of heathenism into the Christian Church; so that, in some respects, things are becoming worse instead of better. The need is increasing every year, and the call of Christ to His people to "haste to the rescue," is becoming louder and louder.

What is to be done? The great trumpet must be sounded, as it has never been. Thousands more must give themselves to the work. It is not merely more missionaries, in the ordinary sense of the word, that Christ wants and that the world needs. It is "every Christian a missionary!" Merchants, tradesmen, soldiers, sailors, civil servants, doctors, bankers, teachers, nurses, people in private life—all who go out to these lands—it is these whom Christ summons to this service. Every Christian who leaves our shores for any other part of the world, is required and expected by Christ to throw himself into the work. The world will never hear the good news otherwise. It is you who must do it. Will you not ask, "What can I do? or get others to do? How may I make the most of my life, so that it may attain the great end for which it was given—the promoting of God's glory and the saving of those that are 'ready to perish'? How shall I be able to look back on my life with the greatest thankfulness and joy, when it comes to a close?"

—Rev. J. H. Wilson, D.D.

The Life of Christ: Prophecy of the Second Coming

"So shall also the coming of the Son of Man be."—St Matt. xxiv. 27.

The disciples, like most good Jews, I might almost say like most good people even now, confounded religion with its instruments and symbols. Religion was identified in their minds with Jerusalem, the Temple, the priests, the sacrificial system. So we identify religion with our churches, our liturgies, our church services, our creeds. It is difficult for a Roman Catholic to comprehend how one can be religious and not reverence the host; for an Episcopalian to recognise the religion of one who does not appreciate the service; for a Puritan to believe one is religious who does not care for a prayer-meeting; for a Calvinist to think that religion can survive if the Calvinistic creed should suffer demolition. It was, in like manner, almost impossible for a devout Jew to believe that religion could survive if the Temple and its system were destroyed. This was the charge against Stephen, that he blasphemed—that is, spoke against religion—because he asserted that the Temple would be destroyed and the customs of Moses changed. When, therefore, Christ told the disciples that the Temple would be so utterly destroyed that not one stone would be left upon another, awestruck, they identified this destruction of the Holy City with the end of the world and that revelation of the Messiah on which their hopes of a greater city and an imperial dominion depended. When, cried they, will Jerusalem be destroyed? and the present dispensation of pagan authority end? and Thou reveal Thyself? These questions were poured in upon Christ eagerly by men who regarded them as all different forms of the same question. Christ's answer bids them distinguish; assures them that the end of Jerusalem is not the end of the world, nor to be accompanied by that revelation of Himself which they impatiently urge upon Him.

Be not deceived, He says: there must be wars, and persecutions, and false doctrine, and apostasies, and the proclamation of the Gospel throughout the world before the end can come. When, therefore, you see the Roman flags flying on the holy hill, do not think the day of Israel's vindication has arrived, nor believe when men shall tell you that the Messiah is at hand. Flee from the doomed city to the mountains. For when the Messiah is revealed there will be no room to doubt. That revelation will be sudden and self-evidencing, like the glare of the lightning when it lights up the whole heavens. Not till after this long period of tribulations, wars, persecutions, false doctrine, apostasies—not without such signs that they who dread the Messiah's coming will be compelled to recognise Him, will be the revelation of His Kingdom. And this Jewish race, though exiled and scattered, shall not pass away till that revelation is fulfilled. Coming suddenly, it will come as a day of judgment; it will come, finding men not looking for it, nor prepared for it; it will find them in their usual employments, and its measurements of character will be as surprising as its advent. It will find men judging themselves and each other by their power to acquire and to control; counting those men great who have great wealth and exercise great mastery. It will bring to bear a new standard of judgment: one which will count him only faithful and wise who uses his power and possessions to serve others, and will condemn him who has used the one tyrannically to smite his fellow-servants, or the other in self-indulgence to drink with the drunken. It will find the professed virgins of the Bridegroom waiting for His coming. But some of them will have fancied that they can obtain in one instantaneous conversion grace for life,

death, and eternity; while others will know that they must pray, Give us day by day our daily bread; will know that to light the lamp is not enough, it must be kept trimmed and burning; will know that to be Christ's one must abide with Christ. These will go in with the Bridegroom to the supper, those will be left without. This day of the Lord will find degrees of faithfulness even among the faithful servants; and their future station and service will be awarded accordingly. For it is fidelity in little things which demonstrates capacity for greater service; while he who thinks that he is virtuous simply because he is not corrupt, and imagines that he is entitled to acquittal because he fancies that he has done no harm, will learn that to be useless is to be guilty. For we are put into life that by love we may serve one another; and the test of life, as it will be revealed in that great day, will not be creeds, ceremonies, professions, or even conscious service of Christ, but the possession of a spirit like His, which feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, and visits the stranger, the sick, and the captive.

I have assumed in this interpretation that in these chapters Christ does foretell a real Second Coming of Himself to the earth. There are several canons to be observed in interpreting an enigmatical address like this: for all prophecies are in some measure enigmatical. First, we may consider how the immediate auditors understood it. It is evident from abundant indications that the disciples understood that Christ foretold a Second Coming, and in the anticipation of that Coming they, and the generations immediately following, constantly lived. We may consider how the speaker must have expected to be understood. Anyone who is familiar with the current beliefs of Christ's time will find it difficult to see how the disciples could have understood this discourse otherwise than as a prophecy of His real and apparent Second Coming. We may try to divest ourselves of all prepossessions and take the words of the address in their most natural meaning. It is certain that one who thus reads these chapters will get as his first impression that of a prophecy of a Second Coming and a Final Judgment. It requires considerable ingenuity of interpretation to find in them any other meaning. We may look at the discourse as a whole, and see what was its moral lesson, and interpret the discourse by the apparent object of the speaker. The moral lesson of this discourse is several times repeated: "Watch, for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh." But if He is not coming, there is no pertinence in this exhortation to watch. The second adventists appear to me to have fallen into an error in endeavouring to ascertain the day and the hour, which Christ declares are unknown even to the Angels. Their opponents have fallen into a like error in declaring sometimes that there is no such day, sometimes that it is past, and sometimes that it is far away in the future. In either case there is no significance in the command, Watch. The one have erred by giving a literal interpretation to prophecies which are poetical and pictorial, addressed to the imagination and to be interpreted by the imagination. The other have erred by practically erasing those prophecies from their Bible altogether. That, as the Old Testament epiphanies were a preparation for the New Testament epiphany, so the New Testament epiphany is a preparation for an epiphany yet to come; that the Church is to turn its face toward the future and live in expectation; that its attitude is to be as far removed from that of prying curiosity on the one hand as from that of sceptical indifference on the other; that it is to watch for the coming without undertaking to determine what the Master has left undetermined, How and When the Coming will be—this seems to me the clear teaching of this great discourse.

—Lyman Abbott, D.D.

Critical Notes on the Gospel

THEN.—During these calamities. *Believe it not.* The Messiah will not appear in that manner. Compare ver. 27-30.

FALSE CHRISTS.—Those who pretended to be the Messiah. Ver. 11.

SIGNS AND WONDERS.—False miracles to support their pretended authority. Compare 2 Thess. ii. 9-12. Such impostors abounded before the downfall of the city.

IF POSSIBLE.—If the grace of God did not sustain them.

TOLD YOU BEFORE.—I have forewarned you of the danger, therefore be on your guard.

HE—i.e. the Messiah. *The desert.* These impostors began their operations in remote and thinly settled districts, where they might get a footing before they should be molested by the authorities. Acts xxi. 38. *As the lightning;* look not for the Messiah in out-of-the-way or secret places, for His coming shall be conspicuous, like the flashing of the lightning through the Heavens. Ver. 30. Note Luke xvii. 21. *The eagles*; the Roman armies shall gather for the destruction of the guilty city, as ravenous birds collect upon their prey. Perhaps an allusion is made to the eagles upon the Roman standards. Ver. 15. *Immediately.* This is one of the points at which it has been held that the transition takes place in the discourse, from the destruction of Jerusalem to the final judgment of the world. In opposition to this view are, 1. The fact that it mars the logical *unity* of the discourse of our Lord. Christ was replying to the inquiries as to the time and the signs of the first of these events, and it is unnatural to suppose Him abruptly breaking away from these, to discuss another topic far remote, without the slightest intimation of so doing. 2. The word "*immediately*" forbids it. This expressly asserts that the events following should be in close chronological connection with what went before. 3. The 34th verse is decisive; declaring that all these events should occur *within that existing generation.* Note ch. xvi. 27, 28. See an elaborate discussion of this subject by Professor Stuart, Bib. Sac. vol. ix. p. 329. *The sun be darkened*; i.e. eclipsed. *The stars.* The ancients supposed that the stars were fixed in the solid firmament above us. *Powers of the Heavens*; the celestial bodies collectively, which, passing daily in harmonious order across the Heavens, were likened to an army in its march, and hence called the Heavenly *host.* Isa. xxxiv. 4; xl. 26. The idea is that the solid framework of the skies should be shaken so that the stars should become loosened from their sockets, and fall to the ground, like the meteors in our atmosphere. It was customary, in the figurative language of prophecy, to set forth under this fearful imagery the judgment and overthrow of wicked nations. Compare Isa. xiii. 9-13, as applied to Babylon; xxiv. 19, 20, 23, to Jerusalem; Ezek. xxxii. 7, 8, to Egypt; Joel iii. 15, to the Gentiles; Amos viii. 9, to oppressors. In Joel ii. 30, 31, is a similar passage, which Peter quotes on the Day of Pentecost, and expressly declares is being fulfilled in those times. Says Stuart, "The Hebrews regarded changes in the celestial physical world as accompanying and indicative of great changes in the natural or political one. Eclipses inspired them with dread and horror; meteors were still more the objects of fear, as coming nearer to them. Hence these things became a common fund of imagery for vivid, and specially for poetic description of what was drealful. . . . The amount of such descriptions is substantially this, viz. that what such changes in the Heavenly bodies would be to the luminaries of the sky, the impending changes

and catastrophes, political and natural, will be to the objects respectively connected with those changes." Bib. Sac. vol. ix. p. 338.

The Sign.—The language of this verse was evidently taken from Dan. vii. 13, and our Lord means to say that that prediction would then be fulfilled. *Tribes of the earth*; rather of the land, i.e. Palestine. *Mourn*; shall wail with terror and fear. Luke adds, "Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." *In the clouds.* The origin of this expression is probably to be found in the sublime appearance of Jehovah on Mt. Sinai at the giving of the law. Ex. xix. 9, 16. This was often referred to in the Psalms in connection with his manifestations in behalf of His people. Ps. xviii. 11; xcvii. 2; civ. 3. So in Dan. vii. 13; Matt. xxvi. 64; Rev. i. 7. *With power*; i.e. a powerful retinue. This, also, as an item in the description, was taken from the scene at Sinai. Deut. xxxiii. 2; Acts vii. 53; Gal. iii. 19. The Angels are often represented as attendants upon Jehovah in His administration (Ps. lxviii. 17; Isa. lxvi. 15); also upon Christ. Ch. xiii. 41; xvi. 27; xxvi. 53; John i. 51; 1 Thess. iv. 16; 2 Thess. i. 7. *Great glory.* The pomp and splendour of a conquering king.

In what sense did Christ thus *appear*, and how did the tribes *see* Him come at the destruction of Jerusalem? Not as a *physical* manifestation. It is not said that there would be a *bodily* appearance, or that it would be presented to the *bodily* eye. Certainly such a phenomenon did not occur at the time referred to. But the *actor* is seen in his *acts.* Christ having at His ascension received His Messianic power, *manifests* the same in the destruction of His enemies and the deliverance of His people; and that manifestation to men is His coming to them. The fearful scenes of the siege and destruction of the city were the revelation of Christ in His Divine glory as the King and Judge of the nation, visible to the understanding of all men. The world itself, ever since then, has *seen* and acknowledged Christ on the page of that awful history. He was really there, and the Angels were really there; as they are now present in the Church and in providence; but they were no more visible to the bodily eye than they now are. "In Scripture language," says Stuart, "God *comes* whenever He proceeds to do or execute any purpose of His Will in respect to man." See Gen. xi. 5; xviii. 21; Ex. iii. 8; xix. 18, 20; Num. xii. 5; xxii. 9; Ps. lxviii. 7; Isa. lxiv. 3. "But we are never to suppose an actual and *visible* coming, except by symbols. God is always and everywhere present, and cannot *come* and *go* in the literal sense."

Sound of Trumpet.—The imagery is taken still from the transactions at Sinai, where the trumpet sounded long and loud to call the people to receive the law. It was customary, also, to blow the trumpet to summon men to battle, to the public feasts and fasts, and other solemn occasions. Num. x. 1-10; Ps. lxxxi. 3; Jer. iv. 5; Joel ii. 1, 15. The idea is that the Angels were to summon the Christians together, to be conducted to places of safety, ver. 13; but we are not to understand it, any more than the Angels themselves, to have been apparent to the bodily senses. *Four winds*; a Hebrew phrase signifying every quarter. *End of Heaven*; strictly, the horizon where the blue concave of the sky seems to touch the earth. Compare Deut. iv. 32; xxx. 4; Ps. xix. 6. The meaning is, "to the utmost extent where those elect are to be found."

Anecdotes and Illustrations

Death of Samuel Johnson.—A minister named Mr Winstanley was the means of comforting and edifying the great Dr Johnson on his death-bed. In a letter to a friend, Hannah More, alluding to this, says: "I cannot conclude without remarking what honour God has hereby put upon the doctrine of faith

in a crucified Saviour. The man whose intellectual powers had awed all around him was in his turn made to tremble when the period arrived at which all knowledge appears useless, and vanishes away, except the knowledge of the true God, and of Jesus Christ, Whom He has sent. Effectually to attain this knowledge this giant in literature must become a little child. The man looked up to as a prodigy of wisdom must become a fool that he might be wise." What a comment is this upon that word: "The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day"!

Be Ready.—The Master said to His servants, "Be ye also ready." He will come at a time when we do not expect Him. The only preparation we can make is to be about His business always, and that is another way of saying that with love in our hearts we are to do the task of the moment, whether it is copying a lesson, working a sum, going an errand, or fighting a battle. The Jews kept the Passover feast with their garments on and everything ready, so that they could march forward at a moment's notice; it not only reminded them of the Passover recorded in the Old Testament when they were delivered from Egypt and the slavery, but it taught them to be listening for the call and ready to obey when the Divine voice sounded. This is the attitude of spirit in which we are all to live.

The Magnitude of Eternal Things.—Albert Barnes, in his sermon on "Life at Threescore," illustrates the magnitude of eternal things as he approaches the end of life, compared with those which ordinarily occupy the attention of mankind, by the following figure: "The earth, as it moves in its orbit from year to year, maintains its distance of ninety-five millions of miles from the sun; and the sun, except when seen through a hazy atmosphere, at its rising or its setting, seems at all times to be of the same magnitude—to human view an object always small, as compared with our own world. But suppose the earth should leave its orbit, and make its way in a direct line towards the sun. How soon would the sun seem to enlarge its dimensions! How vast and bright would it become! How soon would it fill the whole field of vision, and all on the earth dwindle to nothing! So human life now appears to me. In earlier years, eternity appeared distant and small in importance. But at the period of life which I have now reached, it seems to me as if the earth had left the orbit of its annual movement, and were making a rapid and direct flight to the sun. The objects of eternity, towards which I am moving, rapidly enlarge themselves. They have become overpoweringly bright and grand. They fill the whole field of vision, and the earth, with all which is the common object of human ambition and pursuit, is vanishing away!"

Retribution.—The doctrine of *retribution* is held by the Moslems in its most rigid form—more rigid, indeed, than in the Christian system; for there is no atonement for sin. The judgment is inexorable; it is absolute and eternal. Before their eyes ever stands the Day of Judgment—the *dies iræ*—when all men shall appear before God to receive their doom. But in that last day, when unbelievers shall be destroyed, the followers of the Prophet shall be saved. They can go to the tribunal of their Maker without trembling. One day riding outside the walls of Constantinople, we approached a cemetery just as a funeral procession drew near, bearing the form of the dead. We stopped to witness the scene. The mourners gathered around the place where the body was laid, and then the ulema approached the grave, and began *an address to the dead*, telling her (it was a woman) not to be afraid when the Angel came to call her to judgment, but to appear before the bar of the Almighty, and answer without fear, for that no follower of the Prophet should perish.

Questions on the Gospel

1. What does this passage contain? 2. What does Christ say about false prophets? 3. "For as the lightning," etc.—what do we learn from this verse? 4. What other comparisons in Scripture teach us the same thing? (As a thief, 2 Peter iii. 10, Rev. iii. 3; as a snare, Luke xxi. 34, 35; as the flood, Luke xvii. 26, 27; as the destruction of Sodom, Luke xvii. 28-30.) 5. What is meant by a carcass? 6. What is meant by eagles? 7. Explain the words, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days." 8. What are the lessons in this passage for us to-day?

Books of Reference

Edersheim's "Jesus the Messiah"; *Geikie's* "Life and Words of Christ"; *Bruce's* "Training of the Twelve"; "Cambridge Bible"; "Century Bible"; "Expositor's Bible"; "Biblical Illustrator"; *Hasting's* "Dictionary of the Bible."

The Epistle

1 John iii. 1-8.

The Outlook

"Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God."—2. Peter iii. 12.

You know the difference between *looking forward* to a thing and *hastening unto it*. If you were away at boarding-school among strangers, and felt very lonely and home-sick, would you not be glad when you heard that on such and such a day the holidays would begin, and that you would then get home? How you would count the days that came between! how you would be getting everything in readiness, so as not to be hindered from starting! That would be looking forward to the day, and eagerly hastening unto it.

But suppose it was the other way. Suppose you had been home, and had been made much of and had been taken about, and had found a good time generally, and were then told that on such and such a day you would have to go back to school, would you look forward to that day the same as you looked forward to the other? I am afraid not. You would look forward to it, but I don't think you would hasten unto it; you would rather wish it could be put farther off, and I am not sure, if you were left to yourself, that you would be found quite ready to start when the day came.

Well, there is one day we have all to go to—the day of God. That is the day when God is going to call us into His presence. Everybody knows there is to be such a day, but some only look forward to it, they do not hasten unto it; they would like to put it off, if they could, because they are not ready, and they don't want to go. But there are others who are ready: they have friends with God, and they want to see Jesus, and they both look forward and hasten unto that day. Won't you try to be like them?

Let me tell you something which I am sure will interest you. There have been some great shows in London called exhibitions. First there was the

Health Exhibition, then there was the Fisheries, and after that they had an Exhibition of Inventions, for showing all manner of engines and instruments, and other things that were very clever and ingenious. That exhibition was months and months preparing, and it was announced that the Prince of Wales would open it on a certain day. But the exhibitors were told this months before, and so some didn't trouble much about it, they looked forward to the day, but didn't hasten unto it. Some got ready, others dawdled, and a week before the opening day there was such a general want of preparation that a good many of those who meant to exhibit things thought that it would be quite impossible for the exhibition to be opened at the time announced; they said the opening day *must* be postponed, and so they trifled and said there would be time enough. But on Monday, the week before the opening day, notices printed in red ink were suddenly posted all over the walls of the buildings, warning the exhibitors that all work must be finished by Saturday night, and everything be in readiness then for the Prince when he came on Monday. What a hurry-scurry that notice made! Workmen got whatever wages they asked, they were so much needed and so difficult to obtain. But although they worked hard through all that week—working night as well as day—some could not get ready in time. *They* looked forward to the day with dread; only those who were ready looked forward to it with eagerness and hastened unto it. Then those who were not ready, and could not be ready in time, began to plan how they might hide defects and cover up ugly work; and so beautiful curtains were hung up here and there to conceal what was imperfect, and there was a great deal of "make-believe" and deceit; for these people said, "It won't matter; the Prince will never see what is behind these beautiful hangings." And yet, lo! at the very time they were trying to deceive the Prince, *there was the Prince walking among them* in plain clothes! He had come on the Saturday to see with his own eyes how things were getting on; and he saw the cheats, he saw which stalls could not be ready, and saw which were prepared, so that when he came on Monday in great state, he never looked at the make-believes, he was not deceived by their show—he looked only at those that were ready.

Now, dear children, it will be the same with the day of God. Some will be ready, and some will not. If we would be ready we must not only look forward to that day, but also we must hasten unto it. It is not on that day only that Jesus will look on what we are doing. He is walking among us now, though we can't always recognise Him. He is beside you when you are doing wrong, and He will remind you of it on the day of God. But He is also beside you when you are doing right, and though nobody else may know, *He* knows, and He will reward you on the great day. Keep that in your thoughts then always—that Jesus is beside you now. Oh! look forward to the day when He will call you, and hasten unto it. Get the heart ready, and the only way we can do that is by praying and striving to get it full of the love of Jesus and of everything that He loves.—*Rev. J. R. Howatt.*

Colour Blindness

"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil!" etc.—Isa. v. 20.

The subject about which I want to talk to you this morning is colour blindness. Colour blindness, as some of you may know, is an imperfection in the sight, which makes those who suffer from it unable to distinguish colours. It is only within a comparatively recent time that the existence of this disease or imperfection of the vision has been known, though no doubt there have been sufferers from it all along. And the way in which it became known was this:

A little boy, some nine years old, was playing with his schoolfellows in the playground of a school in Belgium, when he began, for some or other reason, to talk about the blueness of one of his companions' lips and tongue. His schoolfellows began to laugh; they thought he must be joking. But no, he was quite in earnest. "What!" he said, "do you mean to tell me that your lips and your tongues are not blue? Eugene, and Alphonse, and Louis, have they not all blue tongues, and blue lips, and blue cheeks as well?" "Blue!" shouted his companions, "they are not blue, they are red!" The boy—a thoughtful and inquiring boy, who afterwards became a learned scholar and professor—began to suspect the mistake must be with him; he must surely see things in a way different from other people. So back he went to his home, got hold of his mother and his sisters, and put the same questions to them. His suspicions were confirmed. The mistake *was* with him; he *did* see differently from those about him. He was, in fact, colour blind.

Since then the subject of colour blindness has been studied and examined, and a great deal is now known about it. Among other things, it is known that in Western Europe—that is, in England and Germany and France—about five persons in every hundred suffer from this defect. So that among those who are here this morning it is pretty certain there are some who are colour blind, though as yet they may not have found it out. Now just think what a loss it is to be colour blind. What would the spring be without the pink blossoms of the almond, and the apple, and the May—without the fresh yellow of the primrose and the deep blue of the violet? And what would autumn be without the changing colours of the woods and the gorgeous splendours of its setting suns? The sweet face of Mother Earth would lose half, and more than half, its charms if it lost its colour. It would be as though we looked at her through a pair of those darkened spectacles which people wear at the seaside.

But colour blindness not only causes a loss of pleasure, but sometimes also it is the occasion of much danger. And this is especially the case with signalmen and pilots, whose very work is to distinguish colours. Just think what mischief might be done upon some great line of railway by a signalman who mistook the red signal of danger for the green signal of safety. Life and limb might be sacrificed to his mistake. Hence the railway companies now pass such men through an examination in colour before they place them in these responsible positions.

Now what I have to tell you this morning is that there is a colour blindness of the soul as well as of the body. And it is of this colour blindness that the prophet speaks in our text: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" And I want you to understand that there are many ways in which this colour blindness of the soul may make itself seen.

I. Men are colour blind when they live only for themselves; when they try to secure for themselves all the gains and pleasures and advantages of life, not caring for anyone beside. They don't call this colour blindness; they call it looking after number one. But it is colour blindness all the same; and those who fall into it lose half the pleasure and beauty of life; for there is nothing which takes away from the brightness of life like wearing the spectacles of selfishness.

II. Men are colour blind, and sometimes boys and girls as well, when they act as though the greatest pleasure of life was to gratify their senses: when they love eating and drinking, so as to be among those who live to eat, instead of those who eat to live. This is a terrible colour blindness, whether it is seen in the gluttony of a boy or the intemperance of a man.

III. Men, too, are colour blind when they make a god of money—when they worship Mammon. Money answereth all things, they say; and no doubt it does answer for many things. But it does not answer for men's happiness or for their highest good. Many a rich man has been wretchedly unhappy and pitifully contemptible and mean.

But there is another colour blindness, worse, I think, even than these, of which I want to tell you.

IV. There is a colour blindness regarding God and regarding His Son Jesus Christ. When Jesus Christ was here upon earth He was the picture of God, the representation of God's goodness and beauty and love. The men who lived in that day looked at that picture of God, that Son of God and Son of Man, and what did they say? They said, He is a wine-bibber, a Man Who likes to go to feasts and get plenty to eat and drink, and Who is "worse sometimes for what He takes." A man is known, they said, by the company he keeps, and the company which this Prophet of Nazareth keeps is the company of publicans and sinners and all kinds of disreputable people. He is a blasphemer, they exclaimed, speaking irreverent words about God and calling Him His Father! He is an evildoer, a traitor, an enemy to Cæsar! When they saw this picture of the Father, this perfect Son, to their eyes "there was no beauty that they should desire Him." They were colour blind.

The Lord Jesus was beautiful on earth, beautiful in heart and character and life. But now He is not only beautiful in Himself, He is surrounded with beauty, He is the centre of splendour and colour and glory.

The well-beloved disciple John, after his Master's Resurrection and Ascension, had granted to him a vision of His splendour and His glory. And John tells us that he beheld his risen, glorified Master, clothed with a long white garment down to the feet, with a golden girdle about His breasts, with His hair white as snow, and His countenance as the sun shining in his strength. He tells us of His Father's Throne on which He sat, "with its rainbow round about the Throne in sight like unto an emerald," and of the "sea of glass like unto crystal stretching before the Throne"; and all these wonderful things are intended to depict the glory, and splendour, and beauty, and loveliness of which our Lord Jesus is now possessed.

And yet men are blind. They see in Him no beauty and no charm. It is good, they say, for the old and the dying and sick to seek Him; for persons with great sorrows or great sins to take Him as their Friend; but for themselves—they care not for Him. Towards Jesus they are colour blind.

Now, boys and girls, I don't want you in this highest matter to be colour blind. I don't want you to be colour blind as regards that loving One Who is our Saviour and our King. He is, if you did but know it, the "chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely"; and I would nŏt, oh, I would not, have you colour blind towards Him. I want you to see His beauty, to behold His radiance and His splendour, to recognise His attractions and His charms. Then will you love Him, and follow Him, and grow like Him. And one day He will call you to Himself, and then shall you, with unveiled vision, behold His glory, that "glory which He had with the Father or ever the world was."—*John Byles.*

Sons of God

"*Now are we the sons of God.*"—1 *John iii.* 2.

This verse of John treats, I think, of three ideas, mutually interconnected, and yet sufficiently distinct in meaning and application to be capable of being considered in consecutive order. Let us consider it as branching off into a threefold division,

I. The Meaning of being the Sons of God.—"Beloved now are we the sons of God."

II. Our Ignorance of our Future.—"It doth not yet appear what we shall be."

III. The Statement that the Sight of and Communion with Christ will, in this Future, Transform us into Likeness with Him.—"When He shall appear, we shall be like Him: for we shall see Him as He is."

1. And first of the phrase, "Sons of God." Beloved, now are we the sons of God. The analogy between the world of spirit and the world of matter, between the phenomena of nature and the soul of man, is a commonplace of preachers. And it is no wonder. Literature teems with it; art symbolises it; and science, according to some, would resolve the two spheres into one. Take, for instance, the analogy which first comes into my mind. Life as a river. The tiny streamlet issuing from some undiscoverable spring in a mountain, and gathering force as it is joined here and there by some neighbouring rivulet; gaining clearness or muddiness, depth or shallowness, according to the nature of the soil over which it hurries; reflecting on its bosom the varied scenes which in its stranger course its confining banks present to it; now dashing downwards in cataract, now seemingly slumbering in deep and subtle pools, loath to move on, and yet all the time, with one determining purpose, making its way towards the boundless ocean, to be merged in it for ever.

Is this a mere imagery of the life of man, a playful fancy of poetic temperament; or is it not, after all, one way, and that not the untruest way, of expressing the inner meaning of human life—of yours, for instance, and of mine? Our first tiny appearance on this earthly scene; the gathering of our habits, our powers, our characteristics, from association with others; the flow of our earthly existence, now seemingly slow, now fast, according as joy transfigures our life, or monotony and sorrow dull it; and all the while one resistless, inevitable course, on to the spanless and undiscovered future beyond, which we call death and eternity. And not less in the change of season—in the glad glow of summer suns; in the wild autumn skies, and the pattering leaf betokening decay; in the cold stillness of the winter shroud, and in the teeming resurrection of universal spring; in such, and countless thousand other ways, does Nature seem to prove her relationship with us, that we are all one mould cast by the hand of the same Creator. The quickening pulse of Nature stirs our pulse into activity; her moods, variable as the chequered shadows that wave over the breast of the corn-field, are our moods; her sorrows, our sorrows; her joys, our joys.

Thus then we may, and, as a matter of fact, do, look upon ourselves as sons of God by *creation*, not least in virtue of our kinship with Nature. But Christianity, as an additional factor in human history, moves us one step onwards. She teaches that we are also sons of God by *redemption*; that is by the at-one-ment and reconciliation of man to God, and of God to man, which the Man-God, Christ Jesus, wrought for us on the Cross of Calvary. As then, from one view of life we claim kinship with God through Nature, so from another point of view we aspire to sonship with God through Christ.

And it is because, before Christ came into the world, there was only one link, and not two, between God and His creatures; because that one link, the link of Nature, was very loosely held and imperfectly recognised by the mass of mankind, and disjointed or entangled, as well it might be, by the pre-Christian thinker; it is because to us as Christians the second link, the link of personal attachment and relationship through the sacrifice of Christ, has been indissolubly forged; it is, I say, for these reasons that we, as Christians, in a

sense far fuller of meaning than even the noblest and profoundest prophet, thinker, or sage of old, can declare that we are "all His children," the "sons of God."

2. But, secondly, our ignorance of the future: "it doth not yet appear what we shall be." It is the peculiarity of many, if not of most, of the deep sayings of the Bible, that they seem to bear different meanings, and sometimes even to state truths contrary to each other and to experience, when presented from different points of view; just as the facets of a diamond flash out different lustres according to the light in which they are held. So it is with the words before us. We all of us know, morally speaking, that we are creatures of habit; that in youth the formation of character depends on particular single acts; that, as we grow older, the strength of these acts and habits grows more and more definite and difficult to destroy; that custom becomes, as philosophy tells us, more than second nature, nature itself; that the force of habit, though in a child as soft and brittle as the daisy-chain with which it fetters itself in play, yet, when the monotony and stiffness of manhood and age creep over us, so enchains our souls that we cannot, though we fain would, break through the iron bonds which encompass and straighten our life. The experience of every individual here to-day tells us that this is our life-history; habit insensibly moving onward, developing, permeating our being, and, like the perpetual trickling of the drop on the stony rock, hollowing out and stereotyping our character.

Is it then, you may ask, to be supposed that in our future life, in this world or hereafter, we shall be transformed, by some mysterious process, into different men, with different powers, different feelings, different capacities for enjoyment or for pain, different ways of looking on things around us and on ourselves? Does not all analogy, you say, prove to us the contrary? As the tree falls, doth it not so lie? Do grapes come of thorns, or figs of thistles? And if all this be true, is not, we may say, this text untrue? Shall we not easily know what manner of men we shall be, by knowing what we are now, and what we have been in the past?

And I answer, all this is true; it *is* true that habit enchains and enslaves us; it *is* true that, like as every generation of men is the legitimate successor and outcome of the habits and life of the preceding one, so too of individuals, the child is father of the man, and we, each of us, shall be to-morrow the aggregate of all that we are to-day, and all that we have been yesterday; and it is most true of all that in consequence of all this an indefinitely great responsibility rests on us for every action committed or omitted, since it becomes another link in the formation of our soul's character. All this I admit. Does a single one of us know what we really are, and what we really have been? If we do, I confess that this text is inaccurate, and that we can know what manner of men we shall be in the undiscovered future. But no; not one of us knows himself, what he is. "Know thyself," says the Greek teacher, "then shalt thou know other men"—a great inoperative proverb, never acted upon. No! deep enough down in his own heart no man ever delves—not one. Look at the man or woman of pleasure, drifting through life on the stream of fashion, with the rudder-lines of purpose hanging loosely from his hands. This is not his true, his buried self; there is an indefinite capacity for good, undeveloped nobility of character lying beneath this sham exterior. This is not what he *is*; this is not his *life*. See the man of business or of trade pursuing his daily routine of occupation, absorbed in the petty difficulties and worries of his calling; earning, as he ought, by the sweat of his brow, his daily bread. This is not the man; this is not his life; this is not what he *is*, but only what he seems, this hard-headed or hard-handed son of

toil. See the theologian, the politician, the scholar, immersed (so thinks the world) in the intricacy of party squabbles, in tricks to catch the breeze of popular favour or notoriety, with blinded eyesight poring over the subtleties of world-forgotten lore. These are not the *men*; these are not what they are; these are merely the picturesque, unreal phantoms of what is within them; these are not their real and inner hidden *life*. No! it is only when the roar of seeming life is quiet within us, when the dial of time brings round for us some holy season, in which we can pause in our headlong rush towards eternity; when perhaps some calamity, the loss of one near and dear to us, makes all the pulses of our being slow; when some change of circumstances, perhaps loss of home, or parting from our native land, brings us face to face with the nakedness of life, and we get rid of the numbing power of association, of the crust of habit which has concealed from ourselves our own reality; it is then, and then, alas! only in an imperfect and far-off sense, that we catch some faint glimpse of what we are and whither we are going.

Have we not felt sometimes the resurrection of seemingly dead feelings, dead emotions which have lain decaying for years like dank leaves in an autumn forest, and suddenly start again into quick life and luxuriance; how memories, perhaps, of past deeds and misdeeds rise spectre-like to haunt us; how undefinable, unspeakable, yearnings after a higher communion with God transfigure for a brief spare our earthly existence, and the spirit searches into itself? These moments, and such as these, are *life*. All else are unrealities, the mere fleeting phenomena of existence, which we, the citizens of a far-off country, grasp, perchance, and sometimes blindly mistake for life itself. And with this unreal, imperfect knowledge of what we are now, nay, generally in utter dark ignorance of it, does it not follow that far less can we forecast the years either in this our earthly pilgrimage or in the hereafter beyond the grave, so as to catch even the glimmer of the manner of men we shall be?

3. But thirdly, the sight of and communion with Christ will transform us into likeness with Him: "We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."

A strange conclusion at first sight, truly; and we are inclined to ask, Do we usually, by mere gazing at an object, become like that object? We may gaze for years at a beautiful picture without getting any nearer the original. And yet, on reflection, surely we grant this at least to be true even in a material sense, that we do, each of us, bear on our faces the marks of what we do, if not of what we are. There are many of us who pride ourselves on our capacity of judging in this respect. We can, we say, generally judge accurately of the occupation of any stranger whom we happen to meet, without the aid of distinguishing uniform or dress. The clergyman, the scholar, the soldier, the lawyer, the tradesman, carry each on his own person some evidence which will give us hints, if not knowledge, of his own particular calling, so that there comes to be more than an accidental connection between a person and his pursuit. "Refinement of face," "thoughtfulness of expression," "air of good breeding,"—what are these phrases but admissions that the character of a man's ordinary thoughts is reflected, as in a mirror, with more or less accuracy on his countenance.

And more than this, a study of physiology will tell us that two persons who are mutually attached, who live together, who have the same pursuits and the same thoughts in common, not only become alike in mental characteristics, but actually grow into remarkable resemblance in face and expression.

And a study of natural history tells us that certain animals grow so like their environment in colour, that you cannot distinguish between animate and inanimate nature, and that the caterpillar, for instance, becomes the colour of

the leaf it feeds upon. A very striking analogy of the words of the text, "We shall become like Him, because we shall see Him as He is."

Yes, just as we nourish the belief that the little children who sit on our knees, fresh wrought from the treasure-house of God, bear on their faces some trace of the Heaven from which they came, so we dare to believe that the Divine Likeness, implanted at the dawn of creation in the life of man ("Let us make man in our image"), still lives—deep down it may be, darkened it may be, nearly stifled, but still *there*, in the soul of every man, woman, or child, dead, living, or as yet concealed in the womb of time, wherever born, of whatever race or creed; that some particle of the Divine still lingers in the life of even the most abandoned sinner, some sparks of the Divine energy, some pulse of God beats, low it may be, but still beats, in the life of every soul whom He hath made.

Yes, that there exists a part of the Divine in man, I for one dare not disbelieve. We are the sons of God, and we shall be more and more conformed to the likeness of Christ in the hereafter, if so be that we will look upon Him and have communion with Him; for then He, the Heavenly Magnate, will draw out of us by His presence, all the God-like nature which lies dormant in our souls. And if we are sons of God, if we in the hereafter, by gazing on Him, by communion with Him, are to be conformed to His likeness, then should our lives be to us those of "dumb, driven cattle," and not those of "heroes in the strife"? Are we to plough our lives in the water, leaving no furrow—a little wave breaking on the shore, and then no vestige of our existence left?

A great preacher says, "We are what the past made us; the results of the past are ourselves. The perishable emotions, the momentary acts of bygone years, are the scaffolding on which we build what we are. As the tree is fertilised by its own broken branches and fallen leaves, and grows out by its own decay, so is the soul of man ripened out of broken hopes, and blighted affections." Yes, life out of death! health out of decay! This should be the teaching of the Resurrection of Christ, the rising on "stepping-stones of our dead selves to higher things."

As we are the sons of God, as we shall be transformed into likeness with Christ, let us *do* something, let us *be* something, in life. We, surely—we, heirs of Heaven, and co-heirs with Christ—have been called into being on this earth not to lead a life of dull passionless inaction, a life absorbed in grovelling gains, in frivolity or discontent, but rather to leave below us, as far as in us lies, the unrealities of earthly existence, and to fix our eyes ever on those eternal realities, the communion with God the Father, His Word and His Works; the communion with that Christ Whose Cross no longer for us stands on earth, but as to the Roman Emperor of old hangs high in Heaven; communion with His Spirit, through Whose aid alone we are enabled to show ourselves true sons of God now in this dark world, and to see Him as He is, and be transformed in His likeness in that hereafter when He appears among the sons of men, and the day breaks full and the shadows flee away.—*Rev. H. B. Gray.*

Love's Great Test

"*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*"—*St John xv.* 13.

I want you to look at two pictures—not pictures for the eye, but pictures for the mind—word-pictures—and I will do my best to make them interesting and attractive to you.

First, then, come with me across St George's Channel, and stand with me at the gate of a beautiful though crowded cemetery near the city of Orleans, in France. There are graves all round us—some hastily covered up, without a blade of grass springing from them, others neatly and carefully kept. Many of them are quite fresh in appearance, for a devastating war has sent many a young and vigorous soldier to his last resting-place. As you look around, you notice at a little distance a man kneeling upon the ground, smoothing with careful hands the mould over a grave, round which he has just placed a rudely framed wooden railing. His back is towards you, but you can see how earnest he appears, as he drops seed into the mound of earth, upon which, as he works, large tears fall. You would like to know something about him, and what he is doing. This is what he would tell you if you could hear him speak.

"I come," he would say, "from a small village many miles away, where, in quiet contentment, I lived with my family around me till this cruel war broke out which has ruined so many happy homes and broken so many loving hearts. Soldiers were wanted to fill up the ranks, and I was told that I must leave my home and my family, to meet the uncertain fate of war. I was willing to serve my country, but my wife, my little ones, who would care for and provide for them? My heart was well-nigh broken as I looked into their pale, sad faces, and felt their clinging arms around my neck. Then a young man, a friend, stepped forward. 'I will go for you,' he bravely said. 'I have neither wife nor child depending on me; send me —I will go.' And he went, quietly, resolutely, as it proved, to meet his death. He fell in the first engagement, pierced to the heart by a musket-ball. They carried him here, to this cemetery, and the news reached me in my distant home that James S——, my friend and substitute, was slain. I resolved to come here and find his grave. By degrees I saved money enough for the purpose I had in view. I came; I found the spot where they had laid him; I placed this railing round his grave; and am planting a few flower-seeds upon it. It is all I can do for him now; and this board will serve to keep in remembrance my friend's noble-hearted love for me."

You look at the board, as the poor man, with brimming eyes, raises it for your inspection, and you read on it, rudely painted, these simple words, "James S——, aged 28. 'He died for me,'" and your eyes are not dry as you turn away, leaving the grateful loving heart to complete the memorial it has raised.

Now let us turn to another picture, familiar to you all. A crowd, noisy and ever increasing, is pushing on its way to one point—a spot without the city wall. Look at the principal Figure in the crowd, on Whom all eyes are turned—a Man bowed beneath the burden placed upon His shoulder, large drops of blood trickling from His wounded brow. He is urged onward by the infuriated mob, till His strength fails, and He falls prostrate beneath the weight of that Cross so soon to become a dying bed for Him. I need not ask you Who this sufferer is; every heart whispers at once, "It is Jesus." Yes, it is Jesus, your Saviour and mine. As you see Him hanging on that Cross, cannot you hear the echo of those words, spoken to His disciples a little while before, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends"?

Do you admire and love the young soldier who fearlessly went into the battle's din and received his death-wound instead of his friend? And can you, unmoved, look at Jesus as He gives His life, not only for His friends, but His enemies—as He gives it even for you? Can you turn away without feeling His great, His boundless love? Oh, surely not; it was for

you, even the very youngest, that Jesus gave His life. He loves you, will you not love Him, and try, in some way, to show that love? Perhaps you say, "I mean to love Him, I mean to serve Him." Mean to do it—when? "Oh, in a little while, when I am older perhaps." When you are older? How do you know that you ever will be older? Perhaps this week, this very day, you may be called away. If you have not loved and served Him here on earth, Jesus will turn from you, saying, "I loved this child, I died for this child, but he cared nothing for it, he did not love Me in return." Shall this be said of any of you?

There was a noble vessel crossing the ocean. Buffeted by continual storms, she sprang a leak, and there was great danger of the water rushing in and sinking the struggling barque. A friendly sail, seeing the signals of distress, bore down to her assistance, "Come on board; we have room for all!" was the message shouted to the distressed vessel. "Not yet," shouted back her captain; "stay by us till the morning—we can hold on till then." All night the friendly sail kept her post; but when the morning broke the crew looked in vain for their companion ship of the previous night. The waves flowed on and left no sign. There was none to tell how in the darkness the noble vessel had sunk in the wild waters, and all on board had perished in the mighty deep. Do you blame that captain? Do you condemn his mad delay? Pause and think how you resemble him if you delay to secure eternal safety by giving your hearts to Jesus now. May you be enabled to do so at once; may you realise the greatness of His love for you, and may it lead you to give Him your best affection in return!

Critical Notes on the Epistle

Behold.—The Apostle now proceeds to explain what this righteousness is which is the sign of our birth of God. *What manner of love.* Compare "so loved the world" (John iii. 16); "great love wherewith He loved us" (Ephes. ii. 4); "if God so loved us" (ch. iv. 11). *The Father*, Who is the source and fountain of Divine Love, as Christ is the manifestation of it; and as the Holy Ghost sheds it into our hearts (Rom. v. 5). *Bestowed.* Compare Rom. v. 15-18.

Called.—The very title of sonship is a privilege. How much more, then, the spirit of it! "*Sons.*" Or, the "children." Thus our Lord described the Jews. "It is not meet to take the children's bread" (St Matt. xv. 26). Yet those children crucified Him. Not all children resemble their parents. "*Knoweth us not.*" Doth not understand, or recognise us. The children being like their Father (in being righteous as He is), are not likely to be understood by the world, if He is not. "Now." Our present position is that of sonship; "and if children, then heirs" (Rom. viii. 17). "*It doth not yet appear.*" It has not yet been made manifest. "*What.*" Whether in form, or service, or glory. Yet we shall still be sons, nay more completely than now (Rev. xxi. 7). "*Know.*" Compare as to the relative positiveness of the expressions, "I reckon" (Rom. viii. 18), "we know" (as here), "I am persuaded" (Rom. viii. 38). "*He.*" or "it"; that is, what we shall be. This does not refer to Christ, but to our future condition. Whatever our condition is to be, and we cannot know it till the time comes for it to be revealed, this we are sure of, that we shall be like God. "*Shall appear.*" Or, "be made manifest, plain to us." "*Like Him.*" That is, the Father, Whose children we already are. Likeness to God revealed in Christ; or, as St Paul expresses it, "to be conformed to the image of His Son" is to be our aim now, shall be our beauty and our glory then.

"*See Him as He is.*" With the purged eyesight of sinless souls (1 Cor. xiii. 12; 2 Cor. iii. 18). "*This hope.*" Of being like God. "*In Him.*" That is, God; better, "on Him," as resting on Him. "*Purified Himself.*" Here the work of our sanctification is made (as elsewhere, Phil. ii. 12) to depend on our own personal effort, the hope of glory being the mainspring of our energies. Compare "and for an helmet, the hope of salvation" (1 Thess. v. 8). "*Even as He is pure.*" Such being the model for our imitation, who of us can say that he has reached it here? "*Whosoever.*" The connection seems to be this; that he who commits sin, not only denies his hope of being like God hereafter, and seeing Him as He is, but also deliberately breaks His law. How then can such a person claim this Divine sonship as his own? "*Transgression.*" Sin is not an accident, nor a misfortune, as human language so often describes it, but a real disobedience to God. "*He.*" That is, Christ. "No man hath seen God at any time" (St John i. 18). But in Christ "God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim. iii. 16). "*To take away.*" The word in the original has everywhere and without exception in St John's writings the signification of taking away, in the sense of bearing as a personal burden, with the view of expiating (see St John i. 29). "*Our sins.*" All of them, and for all of us. "*In Him is no sin.*" Or, "in Him sin is not." Compare "Jesus Christ the righteous" (ch. ii. 1). The Sin-Bearer is also the Sinless One, "a Lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter i. 19). "*Abideth in Him.*" Lives in fellowship with Him, Who is Light. "*Sinneth not.*" We must not water down these solemn and holy words merely to suit our own circumstances, though it is plain from the second verse of ch. ii. that St John, both for himself and for all other Christians, recognises an infirmity and liability to err. The words "express a fact, not a privilege"; and the key to the difficulty is in remembering that the regenerate life in earth and Heaven is one, both in its laws, and nature; and that the same rule and principle which will make sin impossible in Heaven tend to make it impossible on earth. "*Hath not seen Him.*" Under any circumstances for us to choose and practise sin shows a state of mind absolutely inconsistent with the new birth from God, and justifies the doubt if we have actually received it. "*Is righteous.*" In the nature of his moral character. "*Even as He is righteous.*" All righteousness is essentially of the same kind, being the imitation of a righteous God; and when found in man, is done by the help of His grace, acting on the will and mind and heart. The plain meaning of the verse is to show the essential difference between a true Christian, the righteous child of a righteous Father, and a false Christian, who, whatever he may call himself, is really a child of the devil. "He that committeth sin." Our acts are the best and only real evidence of our condition. "*Of the devil.*" Not made, or begotten by him; but as being continually under his influence. See on 1 Peter v. 8.

From the Beginning.—Ever since sin was. *The works of the devil.* These, in the first instance, are all kind of sin and falsehood; but also include their results, such as pain and sorrow, and death (Rom. xvi. 20).

Anecdotes and Illustrations

We shall be like Him for We shall see Him.—There is a story, or parable, of a family in the Spanish Indies, who were in no wise different from their neighbours in the same upland, save that, when they looked towards the sky, every one of them saw a Face looking back upon him. The family got scattered, and multiplied; but, into whatever towns or strange lands they

came, this mark followed every one of them, that still he saw the Face which no other around him could see. Men marked that, while differing widely in other respects, all were like to each other in their look. And while some explained that they inherited this common look from their ancestors, others said that, by looking to the One Face, they grew like to it in their own visage, and consequently, like to each other. The story may stand for illustration of what takes place through looking unto Jesus; we are changed into His likeness—as, in His appearing, "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

God's Children must strive to grow like Him.—More than 200 years ago a rebellion broke out in this country, and ended in a civil war, the most dreadful scourge with which God can visit a land. Englishman was in arms against Englishman, neighbour against neighbour, nay, sometimes father and son, brother and brother, were drawn up in battle on opposite sides. It is difficult to conceive the full horror of that time, when our peaceful villages were laid waste, our towns seized by one party and besieged by the other, and finally our king imprisoned and executed. From such sin and such misery may God preserve this country in future! At the breaking out of this war a royalist gentleman, called Sir Geoffrey Lisle, and Lady Alice his wife, were living in their family mansion at York. Their infant son, who was also called Geoffrey, having been sickly, had been put out to nurse in the country with Lady Alice's former waiting-woman, now the wife of a husbandman, and mother of one little girl. Sir Geoffrey was soon after summoned to join the king at Oxford, and his poor wife, separated from husband and child, pined away, fell into a consumption, and died.

Meanwhile the little Geoffrey grew and thrived under the care of his foster-mother, Margery Hodge till, when he was about a year old, word ran through the village that Prince Rupert's men were coming by on their way to York. Now these wild soldiers were the terror of the country people, and poor Margaret in an agony of fear caught up her own child, glanced along the road, saw the soldiers approaching, and rushed for shelter to a neighbouring copse, leaving Geoffrey fast asleep in the cradle. When the soldiers reached the village, they rushed into the cottages, and devoured everything they could lay hands on. All the provisions in Margaret's house soon disappeared, and then a young officer, looking round, spied the baby in the cradle. Just then the bugle sounded the call to march on; so in a frolic he seized the child and carried it out in its blanket, declaring he had not had half enough to eat, and should get it cooked for his supper. This of course was a joke; what he did mean to do with it we cannot tell, but he certainly carried it off in his arms. After a mile or two, finding his load rather heavy, he thought of leaving it on a bank by the wayside, but the blanket falling off, he caught sight of the little boy's face just as he woke up and smiled at him. The young man, who, in spite of his lawless ways, had a kind heart, was touched with pity, and carried on the poor baby till he saw a neat cottage not far from the road. He ran up to it, threw the child into the arms of a woman whom he found there, told her to take care of it till he came back, tore a gold chain from his neck and flung it on the table, and dashed off to rejoin his comrades before the poor woman could recover from her surprise. She looked in vain for his return to explain what he had done, for within a fortnight he was lying dead on Marston Moor. Poor little Geoffrey was however thrown among kind people, who, though they had plenty of children already, could not bear to cast off such a helpless stranger. They called him Jock, after a little boy of theirs who had died, and brought him up exactly as if he had been a child of their own.

Nay, though the times were hard, they never parted with the gold chain, but kept it safely in their oak chest with a coral mounted in silver which they had found tied round the baby's neck when he was brought to them. Some years passed before Sir Geoffrey was able to make inquiries about his son, and when he did so, he at first learned nothing. Margaret and her husband had left the village, and Sir Geoffrey could not learn where they were gone; nor could he get at the exact truth about the young soldier carrying off the child, though some rumours of it reached him. Still he lingered in the neighbourhood, hoping to hear more. One day, while riding across the moors, he came upon a party of children at play. They stopped to gaze at him, and one boy of ten years old ran up to his side, admiring the gallant rider and the beautiful horse. Sir Geoffrey stopped too, and started as he caught the child's eyes fixed on him with delight; they were the very brown eyes of his lost wife. "Who are you?" he said quickly to the boy. "Jock," answered he. "And whom do you live with?" "Father and mother." "And these other children?" "They are the rest of us." Sir Geoffrey looked closely at the party, and certainly there was no likeness between Jock and the other children. He was tall, slight, and of a clear dark complexion, while they had blue eyes, fair skins, and broad shoulders. "Take me to your mother," he said, and away they all rushed home. Sir Geoffrey tied up his horse, entered the cottage, and, pointing to Jock, said to the poor woman, "In the name of Heaven tell me, is that your child?" She shook her head, went to the chest, and taking out the coral, said, "That was upon him when he was brought to me." Sir Geoffrey looked at it, knew it to be what his baby used to wear, and flinging his arms round the boy exclaimed, "My son, my son!" So the lost child was restored to his father, his birthright, his home; but, as you may imagine, his manners were not like those of an English gentleman, and when the first burst of joy was over, his father was grieved to see how rough and ignorant he was. So he took his son to an old clergyman, formerly his own tutor, and said, "I am obliged to go abroad, will you train my son for me, so that he may not disgrace his father and his family?" Young Geoffrey's life was now a new and strange one. Instead of roaming over the moors and playing or sleeping away his time, he had to learn reading and writing, besides riding and other manly exercises. This was at first very irksome to him, but love to his father, and a desire to be like him, carried him through all. The natural instinct which had drawn him to his father's side upon the Yorkshire moor had ripened into admiration and love, and an appeal to these feelings never failed to influence his conduct. When the boy grew weary or impatient of his tasks, his tutor would say, "Your father will soon be returning, do not let him be disappointed in you," and he would always nerve himself to finish them." Or again, when he behaved roughly and rudely like the untaught boys with whom he used to play, the tutor would point to his father's picture, and the boy would feel rebuked by that noble figure, looking so graceful and so courteous, and would try to leave off his coarse, rough ways. Often too would Geoffrey ask questions about his father, and it was noticed afterwards that he tried to copy him in every little thing. "For my name, too," he would say, "is Geoffrey Lisle." So years passed, till the Restoration of Charles II., when Sir Geoffrey Lisle returned to England. How full of happiness was the meeting between father and son; and how thankful was the father as he watched his son day by day, and found nothing in him that was rough and coarse! The young man was as true an English gentleman as his father. Sir Geoffrey warmly thanked the tutor, but the old clergyman shook his head and said, "The thought of you has done it." And if the thought of an

earthly father was so powerful, how strongly should we be moved by the remembrance that we have been made sons of God, how heedfully should we purify ourselves, even as He is pure, that when He shall appear again in power and great glory, we may be made like unto Him in "His eternal and glorious Kingdom."

THE DRAGON-FLY.—Have you seen the dragon-fly going over a pond on a sunny day? His gossamer wings just above the surface of the water are reflected as you see your face in the mirror in the morning; he circles round as if chasing imaginary foes or competing in a race. You may watch him rise every now and again into the air, as if afraid of losing the power to ascend to the greater freedom, then down he will go, and sometimes, by a miscalculation, a wing will go in the water. Then a little tragedy happens: the dragon-fly feels the weight upon his side, and struggles to free his wing from the water that weighs him down. In the attempt the other wing is caught, and then he floats upon the surface, frantically flapping his wings. They might be signals of distress, but aid does not come. At last the little thing grows quiet, strength has gone from the body, and he floats upon the surface of the pond, dead. The dragon-fly is a brave fellow as long as his wings are dry, but once they become wet he is beaten. Nature seems to have given instinct to all living things, and to have warned them of the dangers they have to face. No sooner does the dragon-fly feel the shock of the water upon his wing than he makes a desperate attempt to soar upward. I wonder whether he has any language to express feelings of despair as he floats to his grave, like a mariner helpless upon the waves, or whether he can call by that buzzing sound to his fellows who are resting on spikes of grass. Can they see the fight for life which he is making, and are they too callous to come to his aid? Boys and girls used to sing a little hymn about wanting to be Angels. Did they imagine they would have wings like the fairies in the stories, or as the chubby little Angels in Reynolds's picture of the "Cherub Choir"? We do not know what we shall be in the future life. The Apostle says: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." I don't want you to trouble about being Angels, but to do your best to be good boys and girls. We have no wings as the Angels in the picture, but we have love and faith by which we may rise to higher heights than birds could ever gain by soaring upon their pinions. Take care of your wings, so that you may be able to rise to the place of vision.

Questions on the Epistle

1. Who wrote this Epistle? 2. What is the key-note of the Epistle? 3. What does John say in this passage about our relationship to God, and God's relationship to us? 4. What does he say with reference to Christ's second coming? 5. In view of this hope what must we do? 6. Quote the Beatitude about the pure in heart. 7. What is said in this passage about those who commit sins? 8. For what purpose was the Son of God manifested? 9. Quote other passages of Scripture that confirm this.

Books of Reference

"Cambridge Bible"; "Century Bible"; "Expositor's Bible"; "Biblical Illustrator"; *Henry Drummond's* "The Greatest Thing in the World."

General Subjects

The Empire of God

An empire is a large region ruled over by a king or emperor.

Sometimes an empire is *very* large, including many countries that stretch along for thousands of miles. Such is the Russian empire. One almost gets tired at the mere idea of travelling about such immense coasts, across such immense plains and mountains and seas, over so many millions on millions of square miles of land and water as belong to this very large empire.

But I am now to tell about an Empire still larger than this, and far larger than any other the world ever saw. It is that great territory over which God rules as King. No other realm like this. The sun never shone on one so broad and grand. By the side of it all other empires that we see or read of, if put together, would be of no account.

For see. All other empires are only *parts* of this. All our world belongs to it. All the American countries, north and south—all the countries of the Old World away to the sunrising—all the islands, great and small, that dot the ocean for twenty-four thousand miles—all the oceans themselves, that no nations pretend to own—all belong to this one great Empire of God. Republics, monarchies, deserts—called by this name and by that, claimed by this nation and by that, inhabited and uninhabited—heathen lands that know not God as well as those lands where He is worshsipped and served—they all belong to this Heavenly Empire. What a great Empire it is!

But great as is the empire which all the countries and seas of the world make, they are but a small part of the Empire over which God reigns. Look up at the sky some bright night. You see it all sown with stars. If you could go toward almost any one of these stars, swift as the lightning, for thousands of years, you would on coming to it find it a much larger world than this on which we live. We can see some twenty millions of such worlds in a fair night, and each of them has about it a family of many other worlds which we cannot see at all. And there is not one of them which, if we should go to it and question it, would fail to confess that it belongs to God. He is its King. He owns and rules it. It is one of the many countries of His Empire.

Is this the end? Have we found the last countries ruled over by God? If we go farther shall we come to the territory of *another* king—come to other worlds which God does not own, or to no territories at all? Do not think it. Could you stand on the most distant world that we can see, you would see just as many and distant worlds beyond you as you do now; and if from that point you should travel on again as far as to the last twinkling star it would be all the same. Wherever you found a world you would find it belonging to the Empire of God. And should you ever come to an end of worlds you would never come to the end of that great sky in which the worlds are moving about like floating islands in a shoreless ocean. And this shoreless sky itself belongs to God. Empty space is as much His as are the solid worlds. No part of it which He does not own and rule. He sees it. His power is there. At any time He chooses He can make it shine with matter and swarm with life.

Of course you will feel that this is a wonderfully great Empire. What line could go around it? What ship could sail across it? What map could give all its provinces, far and near? What lightning on its fiery path could ever come in sight of the end? No boundaries, no neighbours, nothing beyond it—the sum total of all things—behold the Empire of God!

And about as populous with living beings as it is vast. The air, the seas, the lands of our world, are alive with animals of almost innumerable forms. What multitudes of men now living! What hosts of men who did live on the earth, and whose souls when they went away went *somewhere*, and are living to-day somewhere in the Empire of God as truly as they ever did. And then think of the many, many beings there must be in the untold millions of other worlds that we know of! I should be sorry to be put at counting them. I would sooner undertake to count all the leaves on the trees and all the sands on the shores. Yes, I would rather try to do this than to reckon up all the *spirits* even that are to be found in all the stretches of space. The population of India or China astonishes us—that of God's whole Empire would confound us and take our breath away. Nations numberless, races on races without end, mighty populations added to mighty populations, till our strongest thought staggers and falls under the burden! Once in ten years men go round all our country and count up all our people. The *census*, we say, is taken, and we stand astonished in the presence of forty millions of people. The world that we live in is full of all sorts of valuable things. It has rich soils, delightful climates, fat pastures, tempting grain-fields, fruits and plants of ten thousand useful kinds, founts, streams, rivers, lakes everywhere, great forests, productive fisheries, endless mines of coal and iron and silver and gold, sublime mountains, lovely vales, sweet home-sites without number—in a word, as we say, it is a country of "vast resources."

But there is an Empire still richer. It includes the rich country I have just spoken of and many such countries besides. In it are all the useful things and splendid things that sleep in the bosom of seas or bosom of land; all the might and speed that hide in winds and waters and fires and lightnings and earthquakes and magnetisms and gravities and glorious sweep of suns and stars; all the strength of the strong, the wisdom of the wise, the courage of the brave, the beauty of the beautiful, the riches of the rich, the influence of the influential, the goodness of the good, and ten thousand other sorts of wealth and power not to be found in this world—all belong to the Empire of God. Suns and stars, with all their strange and glorious treasures, are in it.

Heaven itself is in it. The infinite power and knowledge of God are everywhere in it—to do all things that need to be done. Was ever so rich an Empire? No end to its stores and resources! Mountains of them as high as Heaven! Oceans of them broad and deep as the sky! Did you ever see the like? We lift up both hands in amazement. It can afford to laugh at the idea of being *exhausted*. Indeed, its resources can never become less—what goes out here comes back there; what disappears there reappears yonder in the same or in some other form.

Houses sometimes so shine in the sunbeams that it is painful to look at them. I have seen cities on sunny hill-sides so lit up with noonday splendours that at a distance they looked like cities on fire. And I have known, and in part seen, a great *empire* even more glittering than glittering Genoa and Naples at their brightest—as glittering as the stars by night or as the sun himself by day. In fact, the sun and stars are only a dimmer part of this Empire. What floods of brightness from our summer sun! It dazzles,

it blinds—we turn away our eyes in self-defence. But all the stars are just as bright—being themselves true suns with their glory somewhat lessened to us by distance. And even our earth, which often looks to us so dull and dark, if seen from afar would shine like the queenly moon or the bright evening star. So it is with that part of the empire which we see, and so, no doubt, it is with that part of it which we do not see because so far away. All sparkles. The light covers all like royal robes. Remotest provinces flash like gems. Some districts flame and dazzle more than noon-day suns, "like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal, having the glory of God!"

History has also her famous empires—empires much in the thoughts and on the lips of men, and to which, for some reason, men look up with great respect and admiration. Such was the Roman empire. Such were the empires of Alexander and Charlemagne and Napoleon. These made a great figure in their day. Almost everybody has heard of them. Their names are still sounding in the world like trumpets. When people talk of "glory" they are very apt to be thinking about the famous empires that raised a great wave in the world's affairs in their time, and which wave is running yet.

But see an Empire more famous still. Who has not heard of the Empire of the Creator? Who has not heard great things of it—heard the *very* greatest and sublimest things of it? Not a corner of the universe where it is not known. Not a language within the great round of the Heavens which does not speak of it with wonder. As for *our* corner, this little earth on which we live, all its religions are full of the idea, more or less veiled, of a Divine government. Men's consciences are full of it. Much more the Bible—a Book read in more than a hundred languages, spoken weekly in thousands of churches, and studied daily in millions of homes. And not in vain. The world rings with the fame of the Empire. It is spoken of in endless prayers. It is praised in ceaseless hymns. And the great praising music swells louder and louder from age to age. Never was Empire so much on the lips and in the thoughts of men—especially of wise and good men. They believe glorious things of it. To them it has a mighty history. To them it is playing a sublime part. To them it shows a sublime procession of events all its own—kings and queens and great captains clad in purple and gold. Behold creations, miracles, prophecies, revelations, regenerations, salvations—see God in form of man, Jesus dying on the Cross, sinners purified and forgiven, ascending to Heaven—see glorious objects, glorious wars, glorious victories, glorious fruits of victories! Never did empire spread such banners—never did such armies march beneath! As to what it is, what it has done, what it aims to do, what it certainly will do, this Empire has no equal. It is the joy and trust and hope and love, as well as fear, of all the best of mankind. Their hearts build to it monuments high as Heaven. Their hearts raise to it triumphal arches that can span the sky. And yet this Empire of God is not thought as much of, and celebrated as splendidly here as it is in most worlds. So *I* think. I *know* that there is one immense country—so immense as to easily balance all the rest of the universe—which is always ringing, from one end of it to the other, with the praise of the King eternal, immortal, invisible; and it almost seems as if I could hear at this moment a voice pouring down through the sky as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder, and as the voice of harpers harping with their harps, saying, "Amen; blessing and glory and thanksgiving and honour and might and power be to Him that sitteth on the Throne for ever and ever."

This famous Empire is very old. Who can tell how old it is? Not I, nor any other man. I can easily tell how old the British empire is, and the German, and I am sure that not an empire in the world and of the world goes back six thousand years. But who knows when the Empire of God began, or can tell a time when it was not? Of course there was no beginning whatever to that shoreless ocean of space in which swim the worlds as so many round, shining islands. The region itself has always existed, has always been full of the sight and power of God, and so has always been an Empire of His. But there must have been a time when it was an *empty* Empire—empty of everything but its eternal King. Then came a time when worlds began to roll and shine in it—when the *first* world started off on its golden round. When was that? I cannot tell. Perhaps no Angel, even, can tell. But it must have been a very distant time—much farther back than the founding of any other empire of which we know. Learned men will tell you that our world must have been rolling for millions of years. And, for one, I have no doubt that worlds beyond counting are even older still—that it would be almost like counting eternity to count the years which have come and gone since untold stars began to twinkle in the sky at the bidding of the Creator. What a glorious antiquity! How the little earthly empires that so loudly boast of their few centuries—how infant-like they look in the venerable presence of such an Empire as this!

This Empire, old as it is, has never had but one King. People think it something to tell of how the same *family* (father, son, grandson, and so on) manages to hold the same throne for a few hundred years. Kings die like other people. Indeed, they are apt to die sooner than some who lead quieter and less tempted lives. Forty or fifty years at the outside take away the healthiest of them. Then comes his successor, and, before long, another successor. And, after a while, the royal *family* itself dies out, or is set aside for another. What is called a new dynasty begins to reign. So it has happened over and over again in France and other countries. So it is liable to happen at any moment in any empire the sun shines on.

But one Empire has never changed its dynasty, or even its Sovereign. Old as it is, almost making us afraid with the mighty tale of its years, it has always had the same King. No successor has even been thought of. You will never hear of a new reign in this wide realm. Coronation Day will never come twice here. "God save the King" always means the same Person. God will never die. But on, steadily on, will His reign proceed. The latest ages will see Him on the Throne as ever. From Everlasting to Everlasting is His name. I am glad of it. This is the King for me. I want no other. No other could begin to do as well. No better news can come to me than that the great and good God, the wisest and best and strongest of beings, will wear His crown for ever. Such good news *has* come to me. "Rejoice ye Heaven, and let the earth be glad; for the Lord God Omnipotent *always* reigneth."

I have seen empires shake. I have seen them fall, time and again. And O how many, many, shaking, trembling, falling empires have been seen by those who have gone before me, away back to the beginning! The very ruins of some that were once famous and vast can hardly be found. History can count up not a few memorable examples. And I fully expect that before a great while some empires that now make much show in the world will shake as a tree does when a mighty wind gets hold of its branches and wrestles with them. They will strain and bow and fall headlong, as did the empires of Alexander and the Cæsars. There is not an empire on this globe that is *sure* to be here ten years hence—I might as well have said

ten *days* hence. A single day, between dawn and dark, has laid low many a kingdom, and is likely to do it again. Not a kingdom on earth but is sure to fall some day, strong as it may now seem. In one way or another, at one time or another, down it will come, never to rise again. Nothing but its name will be left—perhaps not even that. Alas! these trembling, falling things—human empires!

But cheer up, for I will now show you an Empire that knows how to stand. No enemies will ever be able to smite it to the ground. It will never become so old and feeble as to fall of itself, like some old tree that has filled out its time, gradually grown rotten at heart and dry in branch, till at last a breath of wind or the weight of a bird tumbles it to the ground. From age to age it will stand mightily against time, mightily against rebellious men, mightily against even the rebellious Angels with Satan at their head. It *never* will fall—no, never! no, never! It never will be in the least danger of falling. Nothing will ever even make it tremble, or give it a single little jar such as would shake a dew-drop from its leaf. Of what other empire can this be said? How glad I am that there is one country that can be counted on—one great Empire that will stand unmoved and immovable all the long ages of eternity through! I like to see something that is not liable at any moment to come down into the dust, something to anchor safely by, something that can neither burn nor drown nor decay, nor be smitten into ruins or even into danger—firmest of pyramids, with the whole creation for its base!

One, two, three—perhaps I have known as many well-governed countries. One, two, thirty—certainty I have known as many countries ill-governed. Sometimes empires are woefully mismanaged. Disorder reigns. There are no steady laws or the laws are bad. The people are not cared for—the sheep have no Shepherd. "No shepherd," do I say? The shepherd is a wolf. He watches, he tears, he devours. The people are robbed. The people are treated like slaves. The throne and palace glitter, the subjects groan and starve. Passed over from the great tyrant to lesser tyrants, then from the lesser to the least, by successive turns of the screw, through all the grades of wicked officers, the juices of the nation's life are squeezed out. Nothing but dry pumice is left. This is the way some empires have been governed. Be thankful, children, that you were not born in any such empire, but in a very different one—*the Empire of God.*

For this Empire, vast as it is, is governed in a most noble and magnificent way. Nay, it is governed in a way that has never been equalled—in a way that never *can* be equalled—for it is a perfect way. You must consider that God, Who governs this huge Empire, is almighty and all-wise and all good. This means that He makes no mistakes. This means that He can do all that power can do. So it means that the whole vast country, away through all the stars, is kept in the best possible order. Its vastness does not stand in the way of this. No Turkish empire is this—a few central provinces well kept under, but as one goes away from the capital disorder ever increasing, until at last, on the frontiers, the government amounts to nothing. The most remote provinces of God's Empire are as well cared for and regulated as the most central. All parts are thoroughly watched over, day and night. Not a soul, not a worm, escapes notice. Each is cared for with an interest and zeal that never flag. The smallest beginnings of wrong things are at once noticed and put under checks. The smallest beginnings of right things are at once noticed and put under helps. The King knows just what to do to meet each case, and He always does the right thing at the right moment. And, by and by, those parts of the Empire

which are now disturbed by wrongdoers will all be quieted, and the wrongdoers themselves will either become good-doers or will be shut up where they can do no more harm.

On Making Cakes

"*The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of Heaven.*"—*Jer. vii.* 18.

I should like you all to repeat the text until you know it thoroughly, and be able to answer without hesitation what the children did, what the fathers did, and what the women did. Again, who gathered the wood? who kindled the fire? and who kneaded the dough? Now this verse is full of interest to children because it speaks of children, of fathers, of women—that is, of mothers, aunts, and sisters—and last, but not always least, of cakes. I like the verse very much, because it shows how each may take his part in what has to be done by the united efforts of all. It is important for us to understand at the outset what had to be done on this occasion. The people who lived in Jerusalem at this time, alas! worshipped the sun, and called it Baal, also the moon, and called it Ashtoreth—just as our ancestors did at one time in this country, calling the day upon which they worshipped the sun *Sun*day, and the day upon which they worshipped the moon *Mon*day. In Jerusalem, at the time referred to in our text, the people used to offer cakes to the moon. These cakes were always made round to resemble the moon. This offering was considered to be a very important one, and all wanted to have a share in making the cakes and presenting them.

Now the first thing that had to be done was to get plenty of firewood. You cannot make a cake without fire, and you cannot get fire without fuel. Thus I think I can hear a Jewish mother say, "Now, my children, I want you to get some good firewood for to-morrow—wood that will burn brightly; I am going to make some cakes for the queen of Heaven, and—who knows? —perhaps there may be a few tit-bits left!" Off the children go. That's just the work they like; they can stoop easily, or jump over the hedge or fence, and tear their clothes without having much scolding, as they are gathering wood for their mother. Little Hannah gathers her apron full, and Dan or Benjamin as much as he can carry in his arms, and they return home full of glee. They have done their part.

But the following morning the fire had to be kindled. The fathers were best able to do that. Children were taught then, as now, not to play with fire, and the mothers were engaged in another way, so the fathers had to kindle it. There was the difficulty of lighting it in those days before matches were invented, and even before flint and steel were in use. It required strong arms to kindle a fire by rubbing two pieces of wood vigorously together. The fathers could do that best; for they had muscular arms, and they gladly did their part.

Then there was need of clean and gentle hands to knead the dough, and there were none who could do that as well as the mothers, aunts, and the elder sisters. It was their turn now, and the children would look earnestly on and wonder whether the dough would go far enough to make the necessary number of cakes for the "queen of Heaven," or the moon, and one or two over. They little knew that the mother or sister had put in an extra handful of meal for that purpose. Then there was the baking and the consumption of the odd cake or two by the little wood-gatherers. But beyond all this there was a great pleasure reserved for them all—the privilege of presenting to the moon the cakes in the making of which they

had all had a part, and which were as round and as perfect as a woman's hand could make them.

Of course it is very sad to think of fathers, mothers, and children worshipping the moon in ancient Jerusalem, and forgetting Him Who had made the Heavens and all they contain; yet I think that the way in which they all gladly did what they could, even in the worship of a false goddess, is a good example for some of us in the service of the true God. Children have their part to do still. Often, as in this case, the work begins with children. They cannot do much; they cannot kindle a fire, or make a cake or a loaf; but they can gather wood, supply the fuel, and others will kindle the fire and provide an offering fit for the altar of God. You cannot as yet, at least, go forth to distant lands as missionaries and Zenana workers, and take the bread of life—not as a gift to God, but as a gift from God—to the heathen; but you can enable others who are older than you to do all this. You can contribute your pence to the missionary society, and thus you and the thousands of children in our Sunday Schools and in our homes can supply the fuel, which the zeal of our missionaries will set on fire; touched by that living flame the message of the Saviour's love will become the bread of life to the dying heathen, and the sacrifice will be accepted by our God as a sacrifice with which He will be well pleased.

—*Rev. David Davies.*

Unselfishness

There is a strange story told of a saint who once preached a very eloquent sermon to the fishes. They were all charmed and delighted, but the man who tells the tale says:

"The sermon now ended,
Each turned and descended;
The pikes went on stealing;
The eels went on eeling;
Much delighted were they,
But preferred the old way."

Of course that is only a fable, but we are all like those fishes, we listen to all the good advice that is given to us, but we prefer our own way. Most of the sorrow and misery in the world to-day is due to the selfishness of people who prefer their own way and who insist on having it. You all know that hateful boy who won't play a game of cricket unless he bats first or is wicket keeper, and who, if he does not get his own way, goes off by himself and sulks and makes himself and everyone else miserable. Or the boy who boasts of all the good things he has got but never dreams of sharing them with others. Or the boy who goes into a perfect passion because he can't get what he wants. You have all met boys like that, and you know what an ugly, hateful thing selfishness is. But by way of contrast I want to tell you of a boy who, quite unconsciously, preached a wonderful sermon on unselfishness to all the boys at his school.

You have all heard of Professor Henry Drummond. When he was a boy he was playing one day for his school in a cricket match. The other side had run up a big score, and he was at the wickets with another boy who was a great slogger, and who was forcing the pace. He forced Drummond to run once too often, with the result that Drummond was run out. The other boys were indignant, but as he walked off the field he called out, "It's all right, and you fellows are not to cry 'shame.' Buchanan is playing A1, and that hit ought to have been a four; I messed the

running." Later on the school won the match by the narrow margin of three runs, and the slogger carried his bat. Drummond went up to him and said, "Well played, old chap! finest thing you've ever done!" while the slogger looked at him with admiration, and tried to make amends.

What was it that made that action of Drummond's so fine? It was the absolute unselfishness of the lad. He never thought of himself at all. Every boy knows that to be run out in a cricket match through no fault of his own is a very difficult thing to take cheerfully. It is so easy to lose your temper, or say hard and bitter things against the boy who ran you out. To take a disappointment cheerfully without being embittered requires a great deal of unselfishness and grit.

And yet, do you know, boys, it is just those who have learnt to give up and face disappointments cheerfully who are the happiest people you can find. Henry Drummond was one of the happiest men who ever lived, full of fun, keen on sport and games of all kinds, just the kind of man with whom you would have enjoyed spending a holiday.

Do you know the secret of Henry Drummond's life? It lay in the fact that he had early given his heart to Jesus Christ, and the one great ambition of his life was to become like his Master. Those who knew him best said of him that he was "the most Christ-like man they had ever known." And if you would be generous and brave and unselfish as he was, you too must learn his secret. You remember that it is written of Jesus, that though He was rich, yet for our sake He became poor, that we through His poverty might become rich. He gave all He had to give—Himself, even though it meant the death of the Cross. It is as we live in daily companionship with Him at home, at school and at play, that we shall catch something of His Spirit and learn the joy, not of being ministered unto, but of ministering to the wants and needs of others.—*Archibald Reith.*

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

The Collect

O LORD, we beseech thee favourably to hear the prayers of Thy people; that we, who are justly punished for our offences, may be mercifully delivered by Thy goodness, for the glory of Thy name; through Jesus Christ our Saviour, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The Sundays now begin to be reckoned with reference to the approaching Festival of Easter. As the First Sunday in Lent is about forty days before Easter, it was called *Quadragesima* Sunday: the Sunday before Ash-Wednesday, being about fifty days before Easter, is called *Quinquagesima* Sunday; and the names of the two Sundays preceding Quinquagesima Sunday, are respectively derived from the next decades, sixty and seventy; hence they are called *Sexagesima* Sunday and *Septuagesima* Sunday. The Collect for Septuagesima Sunday (which was contained in the Sarum Missal) is taken from the Sacramentary of Gregory, A.D. 590. The Sundays which precede Lent remind us in the Proper Lessons, of the sin of man; the Epistles and Gospels inculcate the duties of self-denial, faith, and charity, and thus prepare us for the season of Lent, which season prepares us for Easter. Thus, step by step—i.e. season by season—the Church leads us onward to the home of saints, to the home of Angels, to the home intended for the faithful—Heaven.

Prayer

"*Pray without ceasing.*"—1 *Thess. v.* 17.

You have all heard a baby cry, of course! It cries in the day and in the night. In fact, you never can tell when it is going to cry; and perhaps some of you wonder, while it is crying, *when* it is going to leave off. We often see people very cross with babies. They scold them, and sometimes hit their little hands and arms; but I must say that it is not only cruel of them to do so, but that I do not believe it is the right way to make them leave off crying. We all cried when we were babies. One of the first things we did on coming into the world was to cry! Why, then, are people so angry sometimes when the baby cries? It is natural for babies to cry, just as it is natural for boys to like cricket or football, or for girls to take a delight in playing at school, or nursing their dolls. By *natural*, I mean something which you do without having to *make* yourself do it. For instance, it is natural to eat, to drink, to walk, and to sleep.

And why should the baby make such a noise, perhaps you say? Why should it be natural for the baby to cry? I will tell you. When a baby cries, it is either saying that it wants some food, or that it is in pain; or, perhaps, it has been frightened at something it has seen or heard. Each one of you cried when a baby, because, as I said before, it was natural to you to do so. It was your way of making your wants known to your mother or

nurse, as the case might be. But now that you are old enough and big enough to run about, to talk plainly and explain your wants, of course you seldom or never cry!

It would be *un*-natural for a boy or girl over three years of age to cry for things, instead of asking for them. It would be *babyish*. No boy or girl likes to be thought babyish! If any of you do cry, when really you have nothing to cry for, remember that you are babyish then, and try to get out of such a petty and baby-like habit. Fathers and mothers have plenty to trouble them, without having boys and girls, who can run about and talk, and say what they want, behaving as they did when babies.

Then we have seen that it is natural for babies to cry, because they cannot talk; and when they have grown and are able to speak, it is no longer natural for them to cry, but un-natural. When, then, you want anything, instead of crying, you ask your father, or mother, or nurse, if you may have it; and I dare say that in the course of the day you ask for a great many things.

Well, now, we all have a Father in Heaven; and instead of being babyish, pettish, and complaining, and when we have not the things we wish for, we go to Him and ask; this asking is called prayer. Many of you love birds and animals, I have no doubt; and they all have a way of asking you for what they want. For instance, when the cat wants some milk, she purrs and mews and sticks her tail straight up in the air, and comes and rubs herself against your legs. If the dog wants to go for a run with you, he barks and skips about, as if to say—'Come along, let us go for a ramble.' If the canary has no seed, or water, it keeps chirping and pecking its cage until you pay it some attention. And so, all animals and dumb things have a way of letting you know of their wants. *But man alone of all creation prays!* It is natural to these dumb things to purr, or bark, or chirp; and it is natural to man to *pray*. The poor old man who has lost all his friends and feels like a stranger in the wide, wide world, prays to his best Friend, his Father in Heaven. Prayer is said by the lips of little children, which can scarcely lisp forth God's Holy Name; and by lips of people, both old and young, when almost too weak in the hour of death to speak at all.

All men pray; yes, and the heathen to whom we send Missionaries pray! But *they* do not seem to think that, although they pray to their idols, they know much, or can do much for them. Some time ago I heard a Missionary say that he saw a heathen making an offering to his idol (that is his god), and the money he offered was bad, it was only imitation money and of no value. The Missionary said to him: "Why, how is this? Why do you offer your idol god bad money?" And all the man said was: "Oh, he does not know it is imitation money!" You see this man said his prayers to an idol, which could neither hear, nor see, nor speak, and which, of course, being only an idol, knew nothing; and yet the poor man prayed to it! You see, then, how natural it is to man to pray. But although it is as natural to men and women and boys and girls to pray as it is to infants to cry, yet St Paul says "we know not what we should pray for as we ought," and so the Holy Spirit comes to us to help us and to "teach us how to pray aright." Without God's help, we cannot do anything or say anything that is really good: we cannot even pray aright.

Here is a fable, written by an ancient Greek, which tells us how and for what the heathen, many centuries ago, used to pray. The heathen worship false gods—you know that of course. Well, Jupiter was one of the gods to whom the ancient Greeks used to pray. And now for the fable: "Menippus, the philosopher, was taken up to Heaven by Jupiter, that he might hear the prayers sent up to him from the earth. At first the confusion

of voices was so great, that Menippus could hardly understand what was said. However, he made out the words 'riches,' 'honour,' and 'long life,' spoken in different languages and tongues. At length, the sound decreased in volume (it was not so loud) and Menippus was able to hear distinctly what the person prayed for. Here was a petition from a man who had just loaded and sent off his ship, asking that it might return safely, full of rich merchandise, and promising Jupiter a silver cup if he took care of ship and cargo. Now, there was a very great noise again, caused by the vows made for the health of a tyrannical prince, prayed for in his presence; and then there came up prayers, in low whispers, from the same people, complaining that Jupiter allowed such a man to live! After this, a cloud of incense came up to Jupiter's throne, mixed with prayers from the general of an army, asking that he might slay a hundred thousand enemies. 'Hark!' said Jupiter to Menippus, 'there is a voice I never hear but in the hour of danger. It is a man shipwrecked in the Ionian Sea. I saved him on a plank three days ago, on his promise to mend his manners, but he did not; and now he offers me a temple, if I will keep him from sinking.' The last prayer Menippus heard was from an old man, aged 100 years, asking for just one more year of life, and then promising to die contented. 'Now,' said Jupiter, 'this is a queer old man. When he was fifty, he prayed that he might see his son settled in life; then, years after that, he asked that he might see his daughter likewise settled; and years after that, again, that he might see his grandson educated. And when I had granted him all these favours, he now, though nearly 100 years old, sends up a prayer that he may live till he has finished a house he is building.'"

This fable shows us that man is apt to pray—not that he may live a good life, but either that he may be rich, or honoured, or live for a long time.

But do you remember the prayer which Solomon, the young King of Israel, offered up to God at the commencement of his reign? One night, soon after he had begun to reign, the Lord appeared to him in a dream, and asked him what he would like to be given him from Heaven. Here was a chance. The Lord, "the Giver of all good things," saying to a young king, "Ask what I shall give thee!" *He* did not ask for riches, or long life, or the life of his enemies, but replied, "O Lord, my God, give thy servant an understanding heart . . . that I may discern between good and evil." Do you remember, my children, what the Lord's reply to this prayer was? It was this—"I have given thee a wise and understanding heart, . . . and I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour, . . . and . . . if thou walk in My ways . . . I will lengthen thy days."

Now we have been made "children of God," and our Father hears every cry which escapes us. Prayer to God is the soul crying out to its Maker; the child appealing to its Father. "We have received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, 'Abba,'—that is, Father"; and He knoweth that we have need of the things we pray for (when we pray aright) before we ask Him. Therefore we "come boldly to the Throne of Grace." We ask, as of a loving Father; and we ask often—yea, as it were, "without ceasing," because it is written, "Ask and ye shall receive," "Open thy mouth wide and I shall fill it," "Pray without ceasing."

Now, if we pray aright, we shall pray often. Our Lord said, "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint," i.e. not to grow weary of prayer. We must pray with *faith*, for He said, "Whatsoever things ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them." We must *watch and pray with diligence*, for He said again, "Watch ye . . . and pray always." We must pray perseveringly, with the heart as well as with the mouth, for it is written, "Continuing instant in prayer." My children, you pray night

and morning in your bedroom, of course. You join in family prayer, and you say your part in the "common prayer of the Church on Sunday, or at the weekday service. You pray the Church's prayers, by joining in the Amens. You say your own private prayers too; but I want you to pray *in the street sometimes as well.* Oh, no, not to kneel down; but, if you want anything from God, do not wait until you say your prayers on going to bed at night, but ask Him in the street, or in the school, or playground! Yes; tell Him as you walk about, silently and secretly tell Him of your needs. That is ejaculatory prayer—the kind of prayer St Peter used when about to sink on the Sea of Galilee. This is the kind of prayer often made by those who feel that His "ear is (ever) open to their prayers"; by those who often want, and whenever they want, make their requests known to their Father *at once.* He is "always more ready to hear than we are to pray." Yes; and is "wont to give more than either we desire or deserve!" He is never angry when His children cry to Him, and never wishes them to leave off crying, for their crying is prayer; and in God's Holy Book it is written, "Pray without ceasing."

I repeat that you must believe that God *will* give you what you ask in prayer if *expedient*—that is, good—for you; and, to fix this in your minds, I will conclude with the following short story: A little girl went to church one Sunday, when the prayer for rain was going to be said; and although the weather was hot and bright, and it did not at all look like rain, she took her umbrella with her. The people smiled at her, and said: "Why are you taking your umbrella to church on such a fine day?" She replied: "Because the clergyman is going to say the prayer for rain." She believed that God would hear the prayer, you see, and therefore took her umbrella, which she found very useful, for before the service was over it rained heavily, and kept on for some time afterwards.

Lot said: "Oh, let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak (pray) but this once"; but St Paul said, "Pray without ceasing."—*Rev. John Bruster.*

Sin

"*There is no man that sinneth not.*"—1 *Kings viii.* 46.

No; nor is there any little child that sinneth not. This is a most terrible thing to think about. God is all-holy, all-pure. He hates sin. He *must* hate it; for sin is something that sets itself against God—against His will, against His nature, against His love. And He is always looking down into our hearts. He is looking down at this moment on our naked hearts, yours and mine. And what does He see there? He sees that dreadful, hateful thing—Sin. No wonder Adam tried to hide himself in the garden. It would be well if we could hide ourselves from that piercing Eye. But we cannot. We cannot get away out of God's sight. We cannot throw a cloak over our poor sinful hearts so that God should not see how bad they are. Oh! it would be too dreadful to think of God's Eye, and of our sin, if we could not also think of God's love in sending His dear Son to save sinners.

But I am not quite sure that you all know what sin means. I want you to think of what I said—that sin is something that sets itself against God. Now I think you can quite understand that sometimes that which sets itself against God is some act or word or thought which you know to be wrong and against what God commands; while sometimes that which sets itself against God is some state of your heart, which you do not often think about, and which only now and then makes you do wrong things, but *which is always there.* The separate things you do or say or think which are wrong are *sins*: that bad state

of heart, which is always there, is *sin*. "Sins," and "Sin," you see. Both are very bad; but I think Sin is the worse of the two, because Sin is the bad root, while Sins are the bad fruit; and the root is deeper down, and harder to get rid of, and more a part of our very selves, than the fruit. So you see that, even when you do nothing actually wrong, you can never say you have no sin in you, for the root may be there when there is no fruit. St John said a very true thing when he said, even of good Christian people, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

Sins are far easier to see than *sin*. I hope, as you grow older, you will not be content to try to find out and to conquer *sins*, but that you will also try to find out and to conquer *sin*. I am not going to say much about *sin* to-day; but if any one of you will to-night, when you kneel down to say your prayers, ask yourselves such questions as these—"Do I love God with all my heart?"—"Do I love all that is good, and hate all that is evil?"—"Am I glad all day long to feel that God's Eye is upon me?"—"Is it a greater pleasure to me to make others happy than to enjoy things myself?"—I am quite sure you will soon find out that there is something in you that sets itself against God, and is not what God would love to see in His creatures; and that something is *sin*. Perhaps some of you might find such things as pride, selfishness, greediness, idleness, or other bad tempers and characters, hiding deep down in your hearts. And you would know then how ignorant and silly it would be to say, "We have no sin."

But now we will talk a little about *sins*. Children's sins are for the most part little sins. Well; a grain of sand is a very little thing; yet you could sink a ship quite as easily by filling it with sand as by filling it with great stones. And a great many little sins may be as bad as a few great ones. What a little thing a snow-flake is! So light that you cannot feel its weight, and so soon melting that as you look at it it is gone! Yet when snow-flakes keep falling, falling, one after another, all day and night, they will bury the poor traveller who is out on some wild lonely road so that he never comes home any more; or they will rush down the mountain-side, hundreds of tons in weight, and destroy houses and fields and trees and everything in their way! So you must not think lightly of little sins. They may be little in size, but great in number; and a great many little sins can drag you down, and destroy you, as certainly as a few greater ones.

But, children, I want you very much to think of one thing about sins which makes them far more dangerous than perhaps they seem to you. It is this. Each sin makes the next easier. You know what a *habit* is. You often use the word. You say, "So-and-so has got into the habit of using bad language," or "So-and-so has got into the habit of being late," or whatever it may be. Now how do people get into habits? Only by doing things over and over again. You make habits for yourselves by what you do very often. Every act which you do often goes towards making a habit. Now that is worth thinking about; and if you think about it, you will see what I mean about sins being very dangerous. It is very hard to break off a habit. As people grow older, their habits grow stronger and stronger. So you see it is very dangerous to get into a bad habit. Did you ever see a rope-walk—that is, a place where they make ropes by twisting together the bits of hemp of which they are made? Well, you have at least sometimes untwisted a little bit of rope or string. Now could you break one of the thinnest little bits of hemp, if you took it by itself and tried? Yes; but could you break the string or the rope when many of these little bits were twisted together? No. Well; the little thin bits are like little sins, and the rope is like the bad habit, when you have made it by going on a long time with the little sins. Each one may be as fine

as a little thread of silk, but many little silken threads will make a very strong cord. There is a saying I have heard which says, "Sin begins like a spider's web, and ends like a cart-rope." Take care then, my children, to snap it while by God's grace you can.

Now I am going to try to show you, in quite a different way, how dangerous children's sins are. Sin is like travelling along a wrong road. Suppose you were in some great forest, trying to find your way home, and you were to come to a place where two paths started, almost, but not quite, in the same direction, and one of these paths would lead you straight home, but you were, by mistake, to take the wrong one. At first it would part a very very little way from the right one, and, if you found out your mistake, it would be easy to get back into the right one. But, as you went on and on, every step would take you farther and farther from the right path, and, when you had wandered on some miles, oh! what a long way apart the two paths would be! It would be very hard then, if you found out your mistake, to get across into the right path, or to go all the way back and begin again. It is just the same with the path of sin. It may not seem to part very much from the right way. It may go *almost* in the same direction. But the longer you travel in it, the farther off from the right way you must get, and the harder it must be to get back again. Take care then, my children, to go on in the right path, or you may find out your mistake when it is too late.

But how can you keep from sin, and avoid all these dangers? Only by God's help, children. You, like grown-up people, must watch and pray. You must watch—guarding against your little temptations, marking your little sins, confessing them night by night to God. And you must pray—asking your loving Father in Heaven to keep you safe from the Evil One, and to send His Holy Spirit to help you, and to make you good. O children, don't be afraid of God, for He loves you. Don't be afraid of Jesus, for He died for you. Don't be afraid of Satan, for he can't hurt you, when God is taking care of you. Don't be afraid of pain or sickness or trouble or anything that can only harm the body. There is but one thing that I want you to be always afraid of and that is sin.—*Rev. W. Walsham How, D.D.*

Repentance for Sin

"*They went out and preached that men should repent.*"—*St Mark vi.* 12.

Children, I am going to use a hard word, and I must tell you what it means. The word is *conditions*. I would not use it if I did not think I could make it easy. Suppose a little child goes to school, and wants a new book. Her mother says, "Well, Mary, if you are perfect in your lessons, and good in behaviour, for two whole weeks, I will buy the book for you." This is a *condition*. A little boy asks his father to take him a walk to see some place. He tells him he may go with him to-morrow, on the *condition* that he governs his temper, and is a good boy all the day.

So every good thing in this world has some such condition, and for every thing, we have something to do. I will name only four things which have such conditions. 1. God has so ordered things, that any child shall grow up greatly beloved and respected, on *condition* that he is kind and obedient to his parents and teachers, and kind and affectionate to everybody. 2. God has so ordered things, that a man may be learned, on *condition* that he studies and reads. 3. God has so ordered things, that medicine will frequently cure the sick man; but the *condition* is, that it must be carefully taken. 4. God has so ordered things, that anybody may know about God and Heaven, on

condition that he faithfully reads the Bible, and prays to God for the Holy Spirit, and obeys God in everything.

It is just so with everything. The farmer expects to raise corn, but it is on the *condition* that he plant, and hoe, and plant the right seed, and at the right time. That little boy cannot see his top spin round, except on a *condition*—that he do something to make it go; and that power to do something comes not of itself, it was the gift of God. That little girl, just beginning to talk, cannot learn a single letter, or take a single stitch with her needle, except on *condition* that she try to learn. No; you cannot rear a single beautiful flower, so as to get one single blossom, without a *condition*.

Now, the greatest good that God ever gave to us, is that eternal life which Christ bought for us by His own blood. No man ever became holy without a condition for him to fulfil, and it is God Who directs and enables him to do it. No man ever went to Heaven without repentance. Job could not. David could not. Peter and Paul and John could not. Not one of that great multitude who are now in Heaven went there without repentance. Christ preached this condition, and so did the Apostles; so has every true preacher since. Not one in this house, not one in this world, will ever go to Heaven without repentance. If we knew just how many, and who would repent of sin, we should know just how many, and who would go to Heaven. All must repent. Christ says, "Except ye repent, ye shall *all* likewise perish." St Paul says, "God now commandeth *all men* everywhere to repent." You cannot doubt *who* must repent: all must, every human being. A very great question rises up here; and that is, *What is it to repent?*

You all know there are two kinds of money, the good, and the counterfeit. And a man might have a house full of the counterfeit, and yet he could not be said to have any money. It would do him no good. So there are two kinds of repentance. One is good, and the other good for nothing. They may not seem very different, just as two pieces of money may look alike, while one is good and will buy things, and the other is good for nothing; just as two trees may stand together and look alike, while one produces good fruit, and the other nothing but leaves. But you want to know what it is to repent. Let me try to tell you.

A man who is now a minister of the Gospel gave me the following account. I tell it to you in order to show you what repentance is. "I had one of the kindest and best of fathers; and when I was a little white-headed boy, about six years old, he used to carry me to school before him on his horse, to help me in my little plans, and always seemed trying to make me happy: and he never seemed so happy himself, as when making me happy. When I was six years old, he came home one day very ill. My mother too, was ill, and thus nobody but my two sisters could take care of my father. In a few days he was worse, very ill, and all the doctors near us were called in to see him. The next Sabbath morning, early, he was evidently much worse. As I went into the room he stretched out his hand to me, and said, 'My little boy, I am very sick. I wish you to take that paper on the stand, and run down to Mr Carter's, and get me the medicine written on that paper.' I took the paper, and went to the apothecary's shop, as I had often done before. It was about half a mile off; but when I got there I found it shut, and as Mr C. lived a quarter of a mile farther off, I resolved not to go to find him. I then set out for home. On my way back I contrived what to say. I knew how wicked it was to tell a lie; but one sin always leads to another. On going in to my father, I saw that he was in great pain; and though pale and weak, I could see great drops of sweat standing on his forehead, forced out by the pain. Oh, then I was sorry I had not gone and found the apothecary. At length he

said to me, 'My son has got the medicine, I hope, for I am in great pain.' I hung my head, and muttered, for my conscience smote me, 'No, sir, Mr Carter says he has got none!' 'Has got none! Is this possible?' He then cast a keen eye upon me, and seeing my head hang, and probably suspecting my falsehood, said, in the mildest, kindest tone, '*My little boy will see his father suffer great pain for want of that medicine.*' I went out of the room, and alone, and cried. I was soon called back. My brothers had come, and were standing—all the children were standing round his bed, and he was committing my poor mother to their care, and giving them his last advice. I was the youngest, and when he laid his hand on my head, and told me 'that in a few hours I should have no father; that he would in a day or two be buried; that I must now make God my Father, love Him, obey Him, and always do right, and *speak the truth*, because the eye of God is always upon me'; it seemed as if I should sink: and when he laid his hand on my head again, and prayed for the blessing of God the Redeemer to rest upon me, 'soon to be a fatherless orphan,' I dared not look at him, I felt so guilty. Sobbing, I rushed from his bedside, and thought I wished I could die. They soon told me he could not speak. Oh, how much would I have given to go in and tell him that I had told a lie, and ask him once more to lay his hand on my head, and forgive me! I crept in once more, and heard the minister pray for 'the dying man.' Oh, how my heart ached! I snatched my hat, and ran to the apothecary's house and got the medicine. I ran home with all my might, and ran in, and ran up to my father's bedside to confess my sin, crying out, 'Oh, here, father'—but I was hushed: and I then saw that he was pale, and that all in the room were weeping. *My dear father was dead!* And the last thing I ever spake to him was *to tell him a lie!* I sobbed as if my heart would break; for his kindness, his tender looks, and my own sin, all rushed upon my mind. And as I gazed upon his cold, pale face, and saw his eyes shut, and his lips closed, could I help thinking of his last words, 'My little boy will see his father suffer great pain for the want of that medicine?' I did not know but he might have died for the want of it.

"In a day or two he was put into the ground and buried. There were several ministers at the funeral, and each spoke kindly to me, but could not comfort me. Alas! they knew not what a load of sorrow lay on my heart. They could not comfort me. My father was buried, and the children all scattered abroad; for my mother was too feeble to take care of them.

"It was twelve years after this, while in college, that I went alone to the grave of my father. It took me a good while to find it: but there it was, with its humble tombstone; and as I stood over it, I seemed to be back at his bedside, to see his pale face, and hear his voice. Oh! the thought of that sin and wickedness cut me to the heart. It seemed that worlds would not be too much to give, could I then only have called loud enough for him to hear me ask his forgiveness. But it was too late. He had been in the grave twelve years, and I must live and die, weeping over that ungrateful falsehood. May God forgive me!"

Now, I wish to say two or three things about this little boy's repentance. 1. You see that a child may be wicked. He can sin against a father and against God at the same time. God commands us to obey our parents, and to speak the truth. This child did neither. 2. You see that a child is not too young to repent of a sin against his father. Some have an idea that a child is too young to repent; but this is a great mistake. If this boy could repent of this one sin, he could of more; and if he could repent of a sin against an earthly father, could he not of those against his Heavenly Father? 3. You see what true repentance towards God is. It is to feel

sorry and grieved that you have sinned against God, just as this child did, because he had sinned against his dying father. He did not grieve so because he was afraid of being punished, but because his father was so good to him, and he was so wicked against his father. Now, had he felt as sorry for each and all of his sins against his God, as he did for this *one* sin against a man, it would have been true repentance. 4. You see that if we loved God as much as we do an earthly parent, we should repent with deep sorrow; because He has done us ten thousand kindnesses, and is doing them every day; and because we have committed ten thousand sins against Him, more shameful than this shameful sin of the little boy.

There was a wicked boy once who would leave his father's home and go to sea. His kind father tried to persuade him not to go; but he was not to be kept away from the sea. The reason was, he thought he might be wicked when he got away from his father and that there would be nobody to reprove him. His weeping father gave him a Bible as he went away, and begged him to read it. The boy went away, and became very wicked, and very profane. But God saw him. There was a great storm upon the ocean. The ship could not stand against it. She struck upon the rocks in the dark night. It was a time of great distress; and for a few moments there was the noise of the captain giving his orders, the howling of the storm, the cries of the poor sailors and passengers, who expected every moment to be drowned. Then this wicked boy wished himself at home. But he had but a few moments; for a great wave came and lifted the ship up high, and then it fell upon another rock, and she was broken in a thousand pieces. Everyone on board was drowned, except this same wicked boy. Through the mercy of God, he was washed and carried by the waves upon a great rock, so that he could creep up, though much bruised, and almost dead. In the morning he was seen sitting on a rock with a book in his hand. It was his Bible—the only thing, except his own life, which had been saved from the wreck. He opened it, and there, on the first leaf, was the handwriting of his father. He thought of the goodness of that father, and of his own ingratitude. Again he opened the Book, and on every page was the handwriting of his Heavenly Father; and again he wept at the remembrance of his sins against God. His heart was broken. He was truly penitent; and from that hour to this he has lived as a Christian. He is now the commander of a large ship, and seems to make it his great business to honour Jesus Christ. This was true repentance.

But I must tell you in a few words, *why* it is necessary for everyone to repent of sin. 1. Because all have sinned. I need not try to tell how many times. We all have sinned against our parents, by not obeying them, and being kind to them; we have sinned against the Sabbath, by not remembering to keep it holy; against the Bible, by not loving it, and keeping its sayings; against conscience, which stands close to our heart, and, like a sentinel keeping watch, cries out when we sin; against the Holy Spirit, by not doing as He says, when He makes us feel our sins; and against God Himself, Whose commandments we break. Oh! our sins are like a great cloud. Did you ever see a cloud of dust, or sand, in a windy day? And could you count the little particles of dust in it—all of them? No, no. But our sins are quite as many. 2. None will forsake sin till they have repented. You might stop a man from stealing by shutting him up in prison. But this would not stop his wishing to steal; and that wishing, in the sight of God is sin. One of these children might have his tongue cut out, so that he could not talk, and so that he could never again tell a lie; but if he thought a lie in his heart, this would be sin; and cutting out his tongue would not stop his sinning. The Indians some years ago, tried to stop their people from sinning; and so they

give them strong emetics, that is, physic, which made them very sick, in order to have them throw up their sins; but these did no good. The sin was in the heart, and not in the stomach. One of these Indians who had thus taken emetics went to Pittsburgh, and bought a barrel of rum to sell to the other Indians. On his way back, he called and heard the Moravian missionaries preach the Gospel. He was so convinced of his sinfulness and misery, that he resolved to alter his manner of life. He accordingly returned the barrel of rum to the trader at Pittsburgh, declaring that he would neither drink nor sell any more liquors, for it was against his conscience. He, therefore, begged him to take it back, adding that if he refused, he would pour it into the river. The trader, as well as the white people who were present, was amazed, and assured him that this was the first barrel of rum he had ever seen returned by an Indian: but he, at the same time, took it back without further objection. Nothing but repentance would ever have led this Indian to do this. And this, and nothing but this, will make anyone leave off sin. 3. None will serve God unless they have first repented of sin. Christ says, that no man can serve two masters. Suppose a child has a large apple in each hand, and without laying down either, she goes and tries to take up two large oranges. Could she do it? No; because her hands are already full. Just so when the heart is full of sin, you cannot have the love of God in it. If you would stop sinning, my dear children, you must repent of sin. If you would serve God, and have Him for your Father and Friend, you must repent. But remember, it is the work of the Holy Spirit, whether upon the heart of a child or of a grown person; and God has promised to give His Holy Spirit to those that ask. You all have been sorry when you have grieved your parents, and you can pray to God to give you repentance, to make you sorry when you have offended and grieved your Blessed Redeemer.—*Rev. John Todd.*

The Constant Friend

"*He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee.*"—*Job v.* 19.

The man to whom these words were said had great need to be directed to someone who could deliver him from trouble. For many troubles had fallen upon him, and he was in a very sad state in consequence.

I suppose you know something about the history of Job. If not, you ought to read the first and second chapters of his book in order to learn what is told about him there, and I am sure your hearts will be filled with pity for his misfortunes. But read also the last chapter of the book, in order that you may see how, by patience and faith, he came well through all his troubles and temptations, and was more blessed at the last than at the first.

I have chosen the text, not for the purpose of talking to you about Job, but about yourselves. I want to impress it upon you that, young as you are, you must expect troubles and temptations to fall upon you. Nobody is free from them. Ever since Adam's disobedience they have happened to everybody. And they will go on happening as long as the world lasts.

If I could tell you this only it would be but melancholy news. But I can tell you something besides; I can tell you of a *Friend*, a Friend *that sticketh* closer than a brother, Who is able to deliver you in trouble and temptation, and Who can prevent evil from happening to you. And this Friend is not only able, but He is willing, nay, He is intensely anxious, to do this. He will do it, however, only on one condition, namely, that you give up your whole heart to Him. The Friend I speak of is the Friend spoken of in the text. It is none other than God Himself in the person of the Lord Jesus.

"In six troubles He will be with you; yea, in seven no evil shall happen unto you."

I wish you, dear children, to understand clearly how this can be. When trouble comes, it *is* trouble, say what we will; and when misfortune happens, it cannot do so without the evil of it touching us in some way. But if the Lord Jesus be with us in our trouble, why, then the trouble will be found easy to bear, and if, when misfortune happens, Christ is with us, we shall find that His presence outweighs in good all the evil that would crush us if it could.

Part of England is known as the Black Country, and it is so called because the continual smoke from the furnaces of mines and factories quite blackens the air, and prevents the trees and other vegetation from being either so green or free in their growth as in other places. The people of the Black Country are mostly engaged in mining and smelting. It is rough, hard work, and many of the people themselves are also rough and hard. It happened that a young workman in the Black Country was converted to God, and his whole manner and behaviour changed from what it used to be. He did not now swear and get tipsy, and he avoided, as much as he could, evil companions. The consequence was that he became the object of much persecution. I dare say some of you have heard or read of martyrs in the old days, and how they suffered, even unto death, rather than give up their religion. Well, you must not expect that persecution is dead even now. The people of the world do not like Christian people, and they are not slow to show it. Especially, the people of the world do not like any of their own number to become religious. They look upon them as turncoats, and do all they can to terrify them out of their new ways.

At any rate that is what happened in the case of this young man. He was obliged to go to his work; he could not live without it, but must have starved. Besides his religion was not a thing to turn him lazy. On the contrary, it inclined him to be more industrious. Well, he went to work more regularly than before, but every day he had to put up with sneers, and jeers, and ill-treatment. One day the men and boys who worked with him were more evil-disposed than usual, and what do you think they did? Ah, the cruelty of the human heart is dreadful when the love of God finds no place in it! They laid hold on this young man, stripped him naked, and placed him in front of one of the furnace fires, which burned with such a heat as you can hardly imagine. There they held him, while a number of them stood grinning round, using bad language, and uttering terrible blasphemies. And there they threatened to keep him until he joined in swearing with them. But *he did not*. No! he remained silent until the heat had almost overpowered him, when one of his tormentors, having a little more humanity than the rest, interfered to release him.

The clergyman of the parish happened to hear of this brutal treatment, and visited the young man. He found him in a loving and forgiving frame of mind; indeed, he felt pity, not hatred, towards his persecutors, and would gladly have done anything he could in their favour. But the chief reason why I have told you about him is, that I may give you his answer, on being asked how he felt when in that fearful state: "Sir," he said, "I never felt before that Jesus was so near me."

Children, I cannot give you the name of this young man, but I call him a *hero*. Many a deed has been talked about, and sung about, not half so heroic as his. To hundreds and thousands of people it would have seemed so easy to utter one wicked word rather than go through all that suffering. He, however, chose to go through all the suffering rather than utter the wicked

word, and, therefore, Christ was with him in his trouble, and turned the evil which befell his body into comfort as regards his soul.

Of course it is little likely that exactly this sort of trouble will ever fall upon you. But trouble of some kind may, nay, *will*. If you can only meet it in the same spirit, you will be able to come through it triumphantly, and say, "I never before felt that Jesus was so near me." Learn, then, to cultivate this nearness to Jesus. Go to Him constantly. Pray often. Read His Holy Word. Do His Holy Will. Thus He will be always with you, ready to help in time of need.

A traveller has told us that he once witnessed a battle between a poisonous spider and an insect which it attacked. Every time the insect was bitten by the spider, and before the poison could work, it settled on the leaves of a plant which grew hard by, and sucked them; and as it sucked them it was healed, and returned to the battle as strong and brave as before. But the traveller was cruel enough to take away the plant. The poor insect, when bitten, went as usual to look for it, but could not find it, and presently died on the spot.

Now here you have a picture of what is going on continually. Just like this feeble insect, you have to wage a battle with a poisonous enemy. The enemy is Satan, and the poison he fights with is unholy thoughts which he tries to fix in your minds, unholy words which he tries to force from your lips, unholy deeds which he tries to get from your hands. And oh! I cannot prophesy, no human being can prophesy, what troubles, what evils may happen to you and to other people, if you do not take the proper means to prevent this poison from taking effect.

But what is the proper means? What did the insect do? As the insect, every time it was bitten, went to the healing plant, so you must go to the Healer likewise. There is but One, it is the Lord Jesus. Go to Him in the way I have spoken of, and you will come back to the battle as brave and fresh as ever.

The insect, I will allow, was cruelly betrayed—betrayed out of mere curiosity to see what would happen. And efforts will be made to betray you. Efforts were made to betray the young man already spoken of. Your companions may try to betray you, by jeering at your prayers, or laughing at your Bible-reading. Never mind, do not listen to them. Always remember that anything which would turn away your feet from going to the Lord Jesus is acting the very part of the traveller in the case of the insect, and that, if it succeeds, and you fail, the dreadful consequence will be that you will miss Christ's healing power, and fall a victim to the poison of the Wicked One.

The poor insect met with an undeserved fate through the cruelty of the traveller; such will not be your case if you remain in the same mind, and persevere as the insect did. It, poor thing, could not prevent the cruel act through which it died. The traveller was beyond its control. But no matter who or what may try to prevent your coming to Christ, you will be able to come in spite of them if you are determined. For nobody and nothing can remove Christ out of the way. He remains an Everlasting Refuge to all who choose to flee to Him. Six times the enemy may attack you, or seven; every time you may go with the certainty of finding the Good Physician ready to heal your wounds. Nay, sixty times or seventy the thing may be repeated, and He is still there, full of healing and comfort as before, and enabling you to say with greater love and confidence each time, "I never before felt Jesus so near me." "Who, then, shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him

that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

—Rev. G. Litting, M.A., LL.B.

The Captives set Free

"Let me pass through thy land."—Num. xxi. 22.

I want to tell you who it was said these words, and to whom they were said.

A large company of men, women, and children were travelling from Egypt in Palestine, not in carriages or on horses, but on foot, and they came to the land of Moab, which they would have to journey through if they kept the straightest course to Canaan. You remember who those people were now—don't you? The children of Israel, the slaves who had escaped from Egypt, and were being led by Moses to their own promised land of Canaan. They had had such a hard time under the cruel Pharaoh, building him beautiful cities, and working under the hot sun all day, beaten by the overseers when they tried to rest a moment from their work—and that work so hard, it was almost impossible to do it.

You have been in the brick-fields sometimes, haven't you? You know what the work is like. It takes strong men to make good brick-field workers now, doesn't it? But they know at the end of the week they will receive fair wages for their labour, and no Englishman who is worth much minds hard work.

But the poor Israelites were not free men and women, like those we see busy in the fields in England, but slaves, belonging to their master, and treated just as cruelly as he chose to have them treated, and obliged to do so much each day, without any pay for doing it.

But Someone Who loved them was watching over them all the time; you know Who I mean—God; and He sent Moses to deliver them. At first Pharaoh was very angry when Moses asked him to set them all free, and let them go and worship their God, and he commanded the taskmaster to be even harder on the people than before.

The bricks in Egypt were not made quite like those you see our houses are built of, for they mixed pieces of straw in with the mortar, and the straw needed for this used to be given out to them by the overseers; but the king, in his wicked anger because of Moses' request, ordered that the slaves were to fetch their own straw, and yet each day the number of bricks they made was to be as many as before.

If you go to the British Museum to-day, children, you can see some bricks which have been brought from Egypt made by those poor Israelitish slaves, and when you look at them, you can fancy those sad, cruelly treated men and women searching the corn-fields among the stubble, as we are told, to find stray pieces of straw to mix with their bricks, hurrying as fast as their weariness would let them, because the time was so precious, and there was so much work to be got through during the day.

But God heard their cry, we know; and at last Moses gained the king's permission to let them leave the land of slavery and go to their own country, from whence Jacob, their forefather, had come out so many years before.

And it was when they reached Moab that they sent a message to the King Sihon who reigned there, "Let me pass through thy land." You see it would not have been right for Israel to settle in the wilderness then, because

God's order for them was to go forward until they came to Canaan. Their duty was to pass on until at last they reached their home.

Sihon would not agree to their travelling quietly through his dominions, although they would not have hurt him, as they were ordered by God not to meddle with him, and they had sent him word they would not injure his property. But he gathered his army, and came out into the wilderness to fight them, but although he was so strong, the Israelites won the battle, and took his cities, and rested there a little time while they sent forward spies (or scouts, as we call them now) to see what enemies were in their road beyond.

You see, they could not stay in Moab altogether; they knew they must still go forward, still pass on to Canaan, and so in a little while they left this mountainous country, and again continued their travels.

I expect you know the journey of the children of Israel from Egypt, the country of slavery, to Palestine, is a picture of our journey from earth to Heaven. And perhaps you can't quite see why it is a picture of it. Let us try and find out now.

First of all, the Israelites were captives under a very cruel master who did not care how much they suffered, or how many of them died.

And you and I, and all our friends, and the people we do not even know, were born in captivity—the captivity of sin, and Satan was the cruel master who had got us in his power.

Perhaps some of us have wanted to get free sometimes, have wished that we were better, that we did not do so many wrong things. I remember, when I was a very little child, lying in bed and crying because I was so wicked, so naughty, and being afraid to go to sleep for fear I should die in the night. How I wished then I knew of someone strong enough to deliver me, to enable me to be good—to take away my fear, and show me how to set out upon the journey to Heaven.

I didn't learn the way then, children, or the name of anyone who I thought could help me, but I did later, and that was the Lord Jesus Christ. I read in my Bible how He came to set the prisoner at liberty, by forgiving all my sins, and giving me His Holy Spirit to help me to do right.

So, like Moses, He was my Deliverer Who set me free from the captivity of Satan when I asked Him, so that I was able to start out for the promised land, the Heavenly Canaan, with Him as my Guide.

Are any of you thinking, how do I know He is with me now?

By this; when I want to do wrong, His Holy Spirit in my heart whispers to me not to do it. Conscience, as we call it, is God's voice speaking to us. When we feel very uncomfortable on account of what we have done, it is that voice in our hearts speaking very plainly to us, trying to lead us back into the right road to Heaven. It is not an easy journey children, from earth to Heaven because we have to pass right through the enemy's country.

The earth is now under Satan's sway; he is called the prince of this world, and when he sees day by day drawing nearer to our Heavenly home, he comes out to do battle with us. He makes it hard for us to do right, hard to lead Christian lives, and perhaps we sometimes grow discouraged, and afraid, and say, "It is no use trying; I always get blamed—I always seem to do wrong." When that is so, it is Satan, your enemy, trying to destroy you in the battle against sin. Next time he tries you like that, think of the children of Israel when Sihon came against them, and how God enabled them to destroy him, and all those other enemies who tried afterwards to keep them out of the Land of Promise. We are told this plainly in the

Psalms, where it says: "The Lord is great . . . Who smote great nations, and slew mighty kings; Sihon King of the Amorites, and Og King of Bashan . . . and gave their lands for an heritage, an heritage unto Israel His people."

And that same God is with you, children, now, just as strong and great as He was then, just as loving and ready to help you as He was to help Israel.

Who among you will let Him lead you out of captivity, so that you may no longer be a slave, but henceforth a soldier of Jesus Christ? It's always nice to be on the winning side, isn't it? Never forget, children, in all temptations and troubles that may come to you in life, that God's side is always the winning side: "For He that is in you is greater than he that is in the world."

There was once a British merchant who came across a Mussulman slave, one who had been born free, but made captive in war. Touched by his sorrow, the merchant bought him from the captain. The slave was very angry when he understood what had been done, and called his new master all sorts of bad names. His surprise was very great, when the merchant answered him, "I have redeemed you, to set you free." The poor man burst into tears when he heard this, and throwing himself down at his benefactor's feet he exclaimed, "You have taken my heart captive; I am your slave for ever!"

Children, Jesus Christ died on the Cross to pay the price demanded for you; He died to set you free. What will you do for Him in return? Like the poor slave, will you not kneel at His feet and thank Him for having redeemed you, and offer to be His faithful servant unto your life's end?

"Thy life was given for me;
Thy blood, O Lord, was shed
That I might ransomed be,
And quicken'd from the dead:
Thy life was given for me;
What have I given for Thee?"

—Mrs Harding Kelly.

Anecdotes and Illustrations

Prayer.—When a pump is frequently used, but little pains are necessary to obtain water; the water pours out at the first stroke, because it is high; but if the pump has not been used for a long time the water gets low, and when you want it you must pump a long while, and the water comes only after great efforts. It is so with prayer. If we are instant in prayer, every little circumstance awakens the disposition to pray, and desire and words are always ready. But if we neglect prayer it is difficult for us to pray.

Sin and its Consequences.—The Rev. Rowland Hill preaching on one occasion from this text, at Cowes, began his sermon as follows: "On my way to your island, I visited the county jail at Winchester, and there I saw many who were accused of heavy crimes, but who seemed careless and indifferent, and to have but little sense of their awful situation. But one young man attracted my attention: he kept separate from the rest, and seemed very much troubled. I went up to him and said, 'And what have you done, young man?' 'Sir,' said he, deeply affected, 'I have done that which I cannot undo, and which has undone me.' This, my dear friends," said the minister, "is the situation of every one of you. You have each of you done that which has undone you, and which you cannot undo."

The Condition of Protection.—Evil is never a thing to play with.

When God promises His protection against evil, it is understood that we, on our part, shall keep aloof from it as much as possible; that we shall not, at any rate, go recklessly or carelessly into it. I can remember an event in my early life. I had come home from school for a holiday. My father had just bought a fine large dog. Of course I was rather afraid of the powerful animal, and as we were going out to walk, I was rather uneasy when I saw that my father was to take the dog along with us. But he bade me relinquish all fear, as he would keep the animal under his own command, and he assured me that the dog would do me no harm if I let him alone. I found that my father spoke the truth, and as I walked on cheerfully by his side I soon lost all dread. But seeing that the animal was peaceful, I became bold and forward, and began to tease him when my father's back was turned. The consequence was, that soon the blood streamed down my hand and my cries filled the air. "You promised me that the dog should not hurt me," I said sobbing. "Yes," was the answer, "but you did not tell me that you were going to torment him. It was understood that *you* were to let *him* alone."

Love and Wrath.—Theon was one day reading in the Holy Scriptures when he suddenly closed the Book, and looked thoughtful and gloomy. Hillel perceived this, and said to the youth: "What aileth thee? Why is thy countenance troubled?" Theon answered: "In some places the Scriptures speak of the wrath of God, and in others He is called Love. This appears to me strange and inconsistent." The teacher calmly replied: "Should they not speak to man in human language? Is it not equally strange that they should attribute a human form to the Most High?" "By no means," answered the youth; "that is figurative, but wrath——" Hillel interrupted him, and said: "Listen to my story. There lived in Alexandria two fathers, wealthy merchants, who had two sons of the same age, and they sent them to Ephesus on business connected with their traffic. Both these young men had been thoroughly instructed in the religion of their fathers. When they had sojourned for some time at Ephesus, they were dazzled by the splendour and treasures of the city, and, yielding to the allurements which beset them, they forsook the path of their fathers, and turned aside to idolatry, and worshipped in the temple of Diana. A friend at Ephesus wrote of this to Cleon, one of the two fathers at Alexandria. When Cleon had read the letter, he was troubled in his heart, and he was wroth with the youths. Thereupon he went to the other father, and told him of the apostasy of their sons, and of his grief thereat. But the other father laughed, and said, 'If business do but prosper with my son, I shall give myself little concern about his religion.' Then Cleon turned from him, and was still more wroth. Now, which of these two fathers," said Hillel to the youth, "dost thou consider as the wiser and the better?" "He who was wroth," answered Theon. "And which," asked the preceptor, "was the kinder father?" "He who was wroth," again answered the youth. "Was Cleon wroth with his son?" asked Hillel. And Theon replied, "Not with his son, but with his backsliding and apostasy." "And what," asked the teacher, "thinkest thou is the cause of such displeasure against evil?" "The sacred love of truth," answered his disciple. "Behold, then, my son," said the old man, "if thou canst now think divinely of that which is Divine, the human expression will no longer offend thee."

God's Mercies.—A story is told concerning a bold rebel that had made a great party against one of the Roman emperors. A proclamation was therefore sent abroad, that whosoever could bring in the rebel, dead or alive, he should have a great sum of money for his reward. The outlaw, hearing of it, comes, and, presenting himself before the emperor, demands the sum of money proposed. The emperor bethinks himself that if he should put him to death,

the world would be ready to say that he did it to save his money; and so he freely pardons the rebel, and gives him the money. Here now was light in a dark lantern, mercy in a very heathen. And shall such a one do thus that had but a drop of mercy and compassion in him, and will not Christ do much more that hath all fulness of grace and mercy in Himself? Surely His bowels yearn to the worst of sinners repenting; let them but come in, and they shall find Him ready to pardon, yea, One that is altogether made up of pardoning mercies.

Deliverance from Evil.—The late J. H. Evans, of St John's Chapel, London, was in early youth a student of Wadham College, Oxford. This College was notorious as gay and dissolute, and the men there sought every means to destroy young Evans. Speaking after the manner of men, their success was certain; but God did not leave him to himself. Conscience was not silent, and in the midst of the most hilarious scenes, it told him that this was not true happiness; and he has been heard to tell in after life, that when the last reveller of the jovial party had left, he has often looked round on the vacant seats and empty glasses, laid his head upon the table, and wept bitterly. A great check applied to him to keep him from open sin was the power of a mother's love. Once, led on by designing companions, he was induced to enter a place of peculiar temptation; but the thought of his mother's distress darted into his mind, and filled him with indescribable awe. He rushed from the house, and neither raillery nor entreaty could ever lead him again into similar temptation. In late life he spent some hours in Oxford, and went over his old College, and sitting in Wadham Gardens, he dwelt on the scenes he had passed through, and at length, with deep emotion, repeated the text, "Great is Thy mercy towards me: and Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell."

Questions on the Collect

1. What do we ask God to do? 2. For what does the Collect say we are punished? 3. *How* do we confess we are punished? 4. Why *justly*? 5. Mention cases in which when persons confessed that they merited punishment, God pardoned them. (2 Sam. xii. 13; Jonah iii. 4, 8, 10.) 6. Where do we beseech God not to "reward us after our iniquities"? 7. What do we mean by that? 8. By what, do we pray in the Collect we may be delivered? 9. For what *purpose* do we pray to be delivered? 10. What do we mean by the Glory of God's Name?

The Gospel

St Matthew xx. 1-16.

God's Workers

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man that is an householder," etc.—St Matt. xx. 1-16.

I. Introduction.—Recall the case of the young man who did not wish to follow Jesus because he thought he would lose something by so doing; he did not want to lose his money.

II. What Peter Thought.—Peter had not forgotten that he and the other disciples had forsaken all they possessed in order to follow Jesus—their homes, their business, their boats and nets, etc., and he wished to know

what they were to get in return, what reward they were to have. (Not, of course, money.) Jesus said that in the Heavenly world they would be rewarded a hundred times over for all they had done for Him and lost for Him in this life. But then He did not wish them to be thinking too much of rewards, nor to serve Him for what they would gain by it. So He told them a story to help them to remember. What do we call such stories?

III. Vines and Vineyards.—Grapes: elicit where seen, how grown in this country? Why? Why we do not talk of grape trees? Describe vine. What kind of fruit does it bear? Much thought of everywhere, but in some countries will grow freely (with cultivation) in the open air, and people depend for their livelihood on their vineyards. We often read of vineyards in the Bible, for in the country where Jesus lived the vine was largely cultivated. Much care and labour spent on preparing soil, planting vines, watering, staking, pruning, etc., and lastly in season of fruit-gathering (vintage) men, women and children helped and rejoiced and sang as they worked. So it is not surprising that Jesus sometimes spoke of the vine and the vineyards.

IV. The Parable.—He said the Kingdom (God's Kingdom that He was trying to set up on earth) was like a master and his vineyard. The master wanted work done, so, at six o'clock in the morning, went out into the market-place and hired some labourers for the day. They made a bargain for wages—a penny a day. You need not smile, for what they called a penny was about equal to a shilling now. Some hundreds of years ago a penny a day was a labourer's wages in this country, and that was enough for him to live upon. The master of this grape-garden wanted more workers, and went out again at nine o'clock and at twelve o'clock and at three o'clock, and even at five o'clock in the afternoon, and hired more men to work in the vineyard. All ceased work at six o'clock, so how long did the last lot of men have to work? And how long those who were hired at six in the morning?

Then came paytime—how much had the twelve hours workers bargained for? So if they all received their pennies, would they have any cause of complaint? But for some reason the master began with the men last hired, the short-time workers, and went backward to the twelve-hours workers, and, to their astonishment, paid them all alike—one penny each. No doubt the short-time workers were glad, but the long-time workers were dissatisfied—did not say they ought to have more than they had agreed for, but were angry that others should have as much as they. (Jealous, envious.)

V. Lessons from the Parable.—Jesus was not intending to teach how long men should work in a day, nor how much wages they ought to receive. What kind of things did He teach? He wished them to see that the vineyard was like God's big world, where many workers were needed to work for Him. How? Some would work through a long life, some only a short time; there is work for all, for little children, for middle-aged persons, for the aged. And there will be reward for all. But He does not wish anyone to say or think "I deserve more than So-and-so. I have served God longer, I have preached, or taught, or done more for Him." Oh no. He does not wish us to work for the reward at all. For what then? For love, and because we wish to please Him (as Jesus Himself did). Then we shall not grudge whatever rewards God may bestow on others, but shall feel sure He will do what is right. But can children work in God's vineyard? Certainly. The children used to carry little baskets of earth, little gourds of water to the vineyard. Now they can do similar and better things. (Illustrate what children may be.)

The Vineyard Labourers

"When he had agreed with the labourers . . . . he sent them into his vineyard."—St Matt. xx. 11.

The rich young man had just left Christ, because he would not give up all for Him (Matt. xix. 16-22). Peter at once struck in, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee; what shall we have therefore?" (ver. 27). Christ warns Peter, for his words revealed a boastful, self-righteous, and selfish spirit. "Many," not all, "that are first," as you Peter are, "shall be last; and the last shall be first" (ver. 30); and then, still warning Peter, He spoke this parable.

In the East to-day labourers wishing work gather at dawn in the market-place, carrying their tools; and in harvest-time or vintage-time, when work is pressing and labourers are scarce, hirers must be early in the market. This man hires labourers at a penny a day, making a regular bargain with them, and sending them straight to his vineyard. Again he found others in the market-place and engaged them also, not fixing a wage with them, however, but only saying, "Whatsoever is right, I will give thee." They trusted him, took him at his word, and started for the vineyard. Again at 12 a.m. and 3 p.m. he did likewise. About 5 p.m. he found some still in the market-place and gave them work, adding, "whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive." He wished none to be idle while he could give them work. I believe that he was a rich, kind man, who gave work to the poor, and whose aim was not his own gain but theirs. He was no grasping moneymaker, no mere barterer and trafficker, else he would not have given a whole day's wage for one hour's work. He was like some wise friends of the poor in our day who give work instead of alms. Paytime was 6 p.m., when all the labourers circle round the steward, who begins to pay in the way his lord wished. The last hired are first paid, and each gets a penny. Those who had worked twelve hours look on eagerly, and are sure that they will get more than their penny. But the steward gives each man only his penny. They grumble. "These last," as they call them with a touch of scorn, have wrought only one cool evening hour and yet get as much as we who have toiled and broiled for twelve hours. Labourers in the East are much better at grumbling than working. The master singles out one who was spokesman for the rest (as Peter had been for the Apostles)—envy written on his face, and the penny held out in his open hand—and reasons with him. "You agreed to work for a penny, and you have got it. What more do you want?" The grumbler has not a word to say for himself. The close of the parable is an echo of its introduction. "So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen." Of the many called to the vineyard few are "choice" workers, few have a perfect spirit and receive the full reward: most are like Peter in his worst mood when he meanly asked, "What shall we have therefore?" Thus we might say of our jurymen, "many are called, but few chosen," for only twelve or thirteen are chosen while perhaps two hundred are called. There are many ships, but only a few are A1: there are many students, but very few are prizemen, few are first-rate.

God is the owner, Christ is the steward, God's work on earth is the vineyard work, the last hired are the Gentiles, or rather, those Christians who have fewest outward advantages, and the grumblers are all envious and

selfish Christians. Christ's object is to find out and put to shame the evil mind of Peter, and of all who are like him.

This parable contains three of the great laws of the Kingdom. I. Work Enough. II. Wages Enough. III. No Envy.

I. Work Enough.—Our Lord goes early into earth's market-place. He makes the first offer of work. He seeks us before we seek Him. Our salvation is not by works, but for works. Every saved one works well, because working from love. Our Master seeks labourers, not loiterers, not dreamers, for His religion is a practical thing, and no favourite child of grace is allowed to do nothing. Rich, fruitful work is His great desire, and all the materials and tools for it lie at your door. Christ here rebukes those whose religion is all faith and no works, all soul and no body, as elsewhere He rebukes those whose religion is all body and no soul. And our Lord hires at all hours of the day. He wishes no man to be unemployed, not so much for His sake as for their own sakes. He longs to see earth's market-place empty, and His vineyard full. He accepts everyone who is willing to work, whether he can do much or little. No man who has a mind to help is refused, however unskilful he may be. Anyone who stands in the market-place with his tools in his hand is engaged at once. The parable is so framed as to give the greatest encouragement to those most likely to feel most discouraged. The master's desire to engage and encourage the last was so strong that it seemed to many to overstep the limits of justice. No matter who might be offended, it must be made plain that all, even the late and the last, have vineyard work within their easy reach.

Vineyard work is no child's play or bye-job; it needs great care and patience. Of all kinds of work it is the happiest and most fruitful. Till you begin this work you are an idler. Whatever else you may be doing, God chides you, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" One of Europe's most famous workers three hundred years ago, Grotius—said on his death-bed, "I have spent my life in laboriously doing nothing." Much of his life-work then seemed to him not to have been vineyard-work, and he therefore counted it a busy idleness. He truly works who works for God and eternity; all others are but idling in earth's vast market-place.

But each stands ready to be hired, and Satan also is a hirer of men. The prodigal son was hired to feed swine. The hiring is of your own choice. Every labourer agrees. But one hirer cheats his labourers, and keeps back their promised fee. "Ye have sold yourselves for nought" is true of his hirelings.

II. Wages Enough.—This penny was a good day's wage for a good day's work. It was equal to sevenpence or eightpence of our money, and would buy then as much as three shillings or four shillings would buy now. Those hired at 6 a.m. were then quite satisfied with the pay; the last hired would be amazed and delighted. The wage was also paid promptly as soon as the work was done. Other work has poor wages, or no wages, or worse than none. "For the wages of sin is death." "If I had served my God as faithfully as my king," said Cardinal Wolsey in his disgrace, "He would not have cast me off thus in my old age." But God asks no man to serve Him for naught. He promises each a rich reward beforehand, and He never casts off any loyal-hearted servant. The master of the vineyard paid as soon as the work was done, but our Lord pays more promptly. In His vineyard work and wages are blended, the labour pays itself and is its own reward. How real are the native sweets, the inward delights of well-doing, apart from any benefit it may bring us. While the chief part of the worker's reward is in Heaven, he has the beginning and foretaste of it as soon as he

enters the vineyard. Even the mere resolution to enter it gives him a peace worth more than gold. The true worker is no hireling, who is ever asking, as Peter did, "What shall we have therefore?" (chap. xix. 27). He loves the work for its own sake, and not for the pay. He is not double-minded. He does not say to himself, "This is my duty, and besides it will fetch me good wages." He has no such "besides." I heard a gentleman say that he was asked to secure, at a salary of £700 a year, a first-rate chemist for a sugar manufacturer. He was surprised to learn that the man he wanted preferred £200 to £700 a year. He had devoted himself to science, and gold could not lure him away from his chosen work. He did not want more bread-and-butter, but he wanted more of the sweets of knowledge. He was a true worker in the vineyard of science. And is the true worker in the vineyard of Christ to measure his zeal by the visible rewards of it? Were the spirit of the Christian all it should be, he would continue at his work, even were he sure that there is no hereafter. Christ blames the first hired because they seemed more concerned about the wages than about the work, yet He spreads out before us the rich rewards of the worker, and does not blame us if these rewards increase our zeal. It is part of the praise of Moses, that "he had respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Heb. xi. 26). It is also true that as the pleasure-seeker is not the pleasure-finder, so the reward-seeker is not the reward-finder. We get the reward by renouncing it, for only he that loses his life shall save it. As the kingdom offers work to all, and a great reward to every worker, there should be in it—

III. No Envy.—I take this to be the great lesson of the parable. Envy is selfishness in presence of another's prosperity. It is that little, mean spirit which makes us think that we deserve more than others and yet get less. It holds out the penny in its palm, and murmurs, "It is not fair that I, who have been working since six o'clock in the morning, should get no more than those who did not a hand's turn till five o'clock in the evening." It makes us forget the goodness that hired us at all, and pays us our penny, which is far more than we deserve. Envy is the very meanest form of ambition. It makes a man desire others to be worse than they are that he may have the satisfaction of seeming better than they. It sours the whole soul, for it is made up of anger and grief, and has the wasp-like faculty of sucking only poison out of the sweetest flowers. The envious labourers have no joy in the joy and plenty of their comrades. "Is thine eye evil?" Jesus asks the foremost grumbler (ver. 15). The eye is the most soul-like part of the body, and soonest injured by the evil mind within. How lustreless and brute-like the drunkard's eye is. How bad a wicked man's eye often looks. And so envy takes away the pure light of love from the eyes, and makes them fierce and scowling.

The great aim of this parable is to warn us against envy. All need this warning, and children most of all. Envy is the child's besetting sin. How swiftly and keenly a child complains if his little brothers and sisters get, as he thinks, a larger share of any good things than he gets. That child is well taught who has learned to be unselfish. The ancient fable told that all the winds which caused shipwrecks were let out of a bag in the cave of Æolus, and so most of the evils that wreck our peace come from the envy that should have been checked in the nursery. Very many of the evils in our homes, our churches, our offices, our houses of Parliament, and our dealings with the nations of the earth, spring from the miserable spirit of envy which Christ here condemns. Envy is never more unlovely and foolish than among Christians. No wonder merchants envy each other, for the fortune of one man is often built upon the ruins of his neighbour's fortune, and every penny one

man gets is taken from some other man. But I don't envy my neighbour the air, or the sunshine, or the pleasure of reading a good book, for that which makes him richer does not leave me poorer, but his riches should increase mine. He and I belong to one commonwealth, and our weal is common to us both. The penny the last hired got was not taken from the grumblers. Christ's is a Kingdom not of rivals but of brothers. If you belong to it, "all things are yours," and it is great folly and great sin to grudge your neighbours their success and joy.

This parable is like a polished diamond which sends out bright rays on every side. Notice now some of these rays. 1. *The quality of our work is not everything.*—Christ looks to the heart more than to the hand of His worker. The motive gives the work all its value. I believe that the last hired had the purest motives, and wished to make up, as far as they could, for lost time, and so they received not a mite but a penny. Don't rudely measure the value of your work by the bulk of it; don't be like the Romanist counting a bead for every prayer, and thinking he has prayed well when he has prayed often. A Spanish king built a cathedral, and, that the credit of it might be all his own, forbade any from contributing to it in the least degree. He had his name carved on a marble tablet over the door. In a dream he saw an Angel erasing his name, and carving in its stead the name of a poor widow. This was done three times, whereupon the king summoned the widow, and demanded, "Why have you broken my commandment?" The trembling widow replied, "I loved the Lord, and longed to do something for His glory. I was forbidden to touch the church in any way, so I brought a wisp of hay for the horses that drew the stones." The king saw that he had laboured for his own glory, but she for the glory of God, and he commanded that her name should be engraven upon the tablet. That legend teaches the same lesson as our parable. 2. *The young are greatly encouraged.*—The Lord is always out early in the morning, hiring the young for His vineyard. Christ's meaning here cannot be that you may delay your conversion till the evening of life. The last hired said "no man hath hired us" (ver. 7). They accepted the very first offer: do you the same. Don't misread these words, as if you may have eleven hours' play in life, if only you have one hour's work; eleven hours for self, if the twelfth hour be for God. The door is not shut against late comers, but early comers get the warmest welcome. Perhaps you are to be a short liver, and if so, this parable shows you that one hour of hearty service may bring you a reward as rich as that of the oldest and most honoured. The Rabbis in explaining this parable say, "He that lives well and is cut off in the midst of his days shall be equally rewarded with him that lives seventy years." Thank God that life's chief end can be reached in a short life as well as in a long one. 3. *Don't despair if you are among the last.*—Divine love is patient, and calls early, and late, and often. The first should not be proud, the last should not be hopeless. There is hope for the last while out of hell, and fear for the first while out of Heaven. Christ often makes the last first. The past is not irreparable, for God's grace can even restore much of what has been lost, and it is all offered to him who has a wasted past. Despair of none. Never despair of yourself, even if you count yourself among the last. 4. *Pray that you may be among God's chosen ones who harbour no envy.*—Why should you not? They rejoice in another's success as if it were their own; they are not offended that others are preferred before themselves. Some of you may be ministers, and perhaps an evangelist, who has been idling for years while you were busy at Christ's work, may have apparently far greater success than you have ever had. Don't grudge him his

popularity, but thank God for it. Or you may become a mission worker, or Sabbath-school teacher, doing your very best for years, and seeing little fruit, and some raw, untaught convert may spring up by your side who will produce such an impression as you have never witnessed. Your case may be more trying than that of the first hired: you may see him get the full penny while you would be most thankful for half a farthing. Oh, try then to murmur not! Cast out the thought that you have laboured more, and so deserve more, than he. Bow to the will of God, and give thanks that His work is done, though by other hands than yours. Thus conquering jealousy and envy you shall be among the choice ones, the fine spirits, in the vineyard. You shall attain unto the Heavenliest temper that is found out of Heaven, and last though you have been to your sorrow in the work of Christ on earth, you shall be placed among the first in the paradise of God.

—*Rev. James Wells.*

Ruling Oneself

"*So run that ye may obtain.*"—1 *Cor. ix.* 24.

The games to which the Apostle refers are of Greek origin, and the most famous of all were held near Corinth, but they had become naturalised in Syria and Asia Minor, and might be witnessed in Tiberia, Cæsarea, and even Jerusalem. The Apostle frequently refers to the "events" of these popular sports by way of illustration (a preparation for conflict, 2 Tim. ii. 5; a race, Phil. iii. 12, Acts xx. 24; a wrestling match, Eph. vi. 12). "Foremost among the amusements indulged in on these occasions was the foot-race. The name of the race-course was the *stadion* or *stadium*, and the usual length was a *stade* or one-eighth of a mile. The competitors would run backward and forward, perhaps, for twelve or twenty times, and the prize was a wreath of olive or pine or ivy." Another favourite spectacle was the boxing match, from which the modern prize-fight may be said to have developed or degenerated. These two are used as illustration by Paul in this passage in order to emphasise the lesson of self-control. The strict discipline to which all competitors submit while in training is a parable of the way in which all who seek the Heavenly prize should endure hardness and practise self-denial.

To be truly temperate and self-controlled is both a very noble and a very difficult thing. "He that ruleth his spirit is greater than he that taketh a city." "Temperance is love taking exercise, love enduring hardness, love seeking to become healthful and athletic, love striving for the mastery in all things, and bringing the body under. It is superiority to sensual delights, and it is the power of applying resolutely to irksome duties for the Master's sake. It is self-denial and self-control. Fearful lest it should subside to gross carnality, or waste away into shallow and hectic sentiment, temperance is love alert and timeously astir; sometimes rising before day for prayer, sometimes spending that day on tasks which laziness or daintiness declines. It is love with girt loins, and dusty feet, and blistered hands. It is love with the empty scrip but the glowing cheek; love subsisting on pulse and water, but grown so healthful and hardy that 'beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.'"

Although our lesson has no immediate reference to what we call "the Temperance question," it suggests the two great principles upon which Temperance reformers have ever insisted, and which are the foundation of our appeal to the Christian conscience. (1) On the one hand, "strong drink even in moderate quantities injures the will-power of self-control. It

tends to make the body the ruler over the soul. It brings mob rule into the human organism. Says Dr G. A. Smith, "Nothing kills the conscience like steady drinking to a little excess." And so total abstinence from all intoxicants is wise *in our own interests*: it is an important factor in the ideal life. (2) And, on the other hand, whoever would be all things to all men if by any means he might save some, must needs consider the weakness of multitudes who are in danger of utter ruin through strong drink, and abstain for their sakes. No other habit of our time and nation has destroyed so many millions of promising lives, or brought desolation to so many once-happy homes. To the weak let us become weak; and even if we do not feel that abstinence is necessary for ourselves, let us consider those whom our example might injure, and let us abstain for their sakes, for "Christ pleased not Himself"; and His followers should be willing to deny themselves any gratification which works harm to others.—*Rev. G. H. James.*

Grumblers

"*And when they had received it they murmured.*"—*St Matt. xx.* 11.

The boys had to be at school by nine o'clock. It was always a scramble to get breakfast over, and prayers said, and books collected together ready to start by a quarter to nine; things have such a habit of getting in the wrong places, and a boy seems to look everywhere except in the place where he ought to look. The other morning some boys were getting ready, and had more than usual difficulty in collecting their things. There were three of them; little pickles they were. The eldest of the three was a grumbler; he couldn't find his boots; he looked all over the place. "Where did you put them?" said mother. "I don't know," he replied; "I was very tired and sleepy last night." "Did you take them upstairs?" "Don't know, but I have looked all over the house." At last they were found by the side of his bed; it was such a shame, he thought, that somebody did not notice them and take them downstairs to be cleaned. Mother helped him off, and he managed to get to school in time for the marking of the register, but he grumbled all the way.

There was a man who always grumbled when he had the opportunity; it was said of him that he never lost a chance of making a complaint. If he were late in returning home, he would be cross with his wife if she went to bed instead of sitting up, and if she remained waiting he would grumble because she had not gone to bed. It is easy to grumble if you want to; we are all such big targets that any little marksman can hit us if he aims at all. It was said of a great writer, Walter S. Landor, that if he had been transported to an uninhabited island, Walter S. would have fallen out with Landor, and Landor would soon have been on bad terms with Walter S. He was a fine poet, and by and by you must read his verses and his "Imaginary Conversations," but you must not cultivate his bad habit for grumbling; he loved a grievance. Some boys and girls would not be happy unless they were injured; they always know somebody who is acting unfairly, or who has been favoured at their personal expense; they are only happy when they make themselves miserable by a good grumble. Cab-drivers in London are always grumbling at the drivers of other vehicles; they are nicknamed "Growlers." It is not a musical term, neither does it describe an order of merit which you may be ambitious to attain. Paul, the Apostle, urged the early Christians to do all things without murmuring. He knew human nature so well that he was sure that the best would find occasion to complain; he knew that it would spoil the sweetness of the Christian dis-

position, and therefore he prohibited grumbling. The habit of complaining is like the fly in the amber that spoils its beauty. It is such a pity when a boy or girl sits down to the luxury of a feast of grumbling; it becomes chronic until an appetite is acquired, and then nothing but murmuring will do. It is bad enough in grown-ups, but in little folks it is worse than measles or mumps. There is a cheerfulness of spirit which helps in making rough places smooth and difficult things easy. The friends of Jesus must cultivate His spirit. To do that we must get a great deal of sweet reasonableness into our thoughts. We must try and make allowances for other boys and girls, and not suppose that every mistake springs from a bad motive; the unkind things which are said may only mean that the other girl is sorry that she has not your advantages. We speak quickly and think slowly, and our words may come before our thoughts; we do not mean any harm, and would not like to be held responsible for all we say. We must not take ourselves too seriously. We are not the centres of gravitation. Our personal comfort or discomfort is not the only consideration which should weigh with us. If we are having a bad time, let us try to brighten it; nothing is improved by simply grumbling. It was said of a great American that he carried a sunbeam in his face. I hope you will catch a sunbeam; but if you do not, don't grumble.—*Rev. J. C. Carlile.*

Envious Workers

"The last shall be first, and the first last."—St Matt. xx. 16.

Different sorts of mirrors. [*Explain* plane, concave, convex.] A picture that reflects properly in a plane mirror will be distorted and out of proportion in one of the others. To look right in these the picture must be specially drawn, and then it will not look right in other mirrors. Minds, like mirrors, may distort what they receive. The minds of our Lord's disciples were biassed by prejudices and preconceptions, and He had to take these into account when He wished to give a true impression. His words may seem strange to us, but we must try to look at them from the point of view of those He spoke to.

I. What the Disciples Expected.—Picture children at school looking out for conduct prizes. Great excitement to know who will get the best. "Not you; you only came last term." "Perhaps A; he has been here longest"; or C; he is always a favourite," etc. They may ask the teacher, if they like; no one else can tell them. The disciples, scholars in Christ's school, thought their Master would soon be King, and then His scholars would get prizes. [*Cf.* xix. 23-30.] Who would have the best? Peter or Andrew or James or John? Perhaps the first disciple, whoever was the first. All curious to know, and hoped that Jesus would tell them.

II. What our Lord Said.—"All true scholars will have prizes (xix. 29), but they will not be given as you think. Many who have been last to join will be first to receive, and many will receive last who joined first." Strange to those who heard, so a story to help them understand. [Sketch parable.] All were paid the same, and the last-comers were paid first! Not one man compared with *another*, and the longest worker paid the most, but the work of each compared with his *opportunity for working*, and nothing lost through lack of opportunity. Vain to dispute who should first receive a prize or who should have the greatest prize. Each would receive as God willed, and a prize for everybody who did his best.

III. Ourselves.—How much jealousy and ill-feeling, sometimes, when others get above us. What poor chances we seem to have to those which

others have. Greatness does not come this way; the best prizes are not won by rivalry. If you want to be great, try to be useful; God will give you your reward when and as He sees fit.

A Motive for Work

"For Christ's sake."—Eph. iv. 32.

"For Christ's sake"; this is the only argument that can prevail with God in prayer. This is the only key which will unlock the store-houses of Heaven. None other name, and no other plea, will prevail with God. If I ask for mercy at God's hands, how strong the plea, "for Christ's sake." Christ has completed the work of atonement, He, as my surety and substitute, has been accepted, and now if I ask mercy in His name and for His sake, I shall get it. Suppose that God had offered to forgive us for our own sakes. Not one good and solid reason should we find, that He should do so. But "*for Christ's* sake" is a reason, and a good and substantial one. Let us grasp and lay hold of the motive, for it will even move the heart of God. We are often anxious and concerned over the souls of others. The scholars of our classes are our constant care. Let us bear them to God in prayer, and pray Him "for Christ's sake," to bless our efforts on their behalf.

"For Christ's sake" is the Christian's great motive for service. This is at once the motive and the motto for all Christian work. The time will come when this world shall be full of the knowledge of Christ. The whole world is to be won for Christ. "The kingdoms of this world shall become the Kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ." What will bring about this victory? Unlike any of earth's victories, the world shall be won by love! Ambition, lust, and greed, were the motives that moved the hearts of all such earthly conquerors as Alexander, Cæsar, and Napoleon. But Divine love alone moves the hearts of all true soldiers of the Cross. Earthly victories have been reached through blood and fire, hate and malice. This greater victory shall be gained by the gentlest operations of the tenderest love. Every Christian worker is helping on this victory. Every godly minister, every faithful Sabbath-school teacher, is hastening on this glorious result. Let the souls of all be very dear to us for Christ's sake. As we look at the rebellious, let us see Him, weeping over them. Let us strive to look at every sinner, through His eyes; and in His spirit strive to reclaim them. Shall we have at last to confess that our love for Him was such that we did nothing for Him? Out with such love as that! What do men say of love that never shows itself in action?

"For Christ's sake,"—this ought to make men perform deeds which should fit them to rank with Angels. Think what mighty sacrifices have been made from lesser motives. For philosophy's sake men have wasted their health, have worn out their lives, have given their days and nights to study, have spent their last farthing. Look at the great travellers for discovery's sake. Mark their zeal, their courage, their disinterestedness; as may be seen in such lives as those of Sir John Franklin, Stanley, or David Livingstone. What, then, ought not we to do "for Christ's sake"? Work then for Christ. "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard." The workless man is a useless man. No man is so much to be pitied as he who has drifted into that dead calm, where he remains

> "As idle as a painted ship,
> Upon a painted sea."

God is an eternal worker. It is our highest honour to be called "workers

together with Him." We live in an age of earnest work. The powers of evil are more active than ever they were before. Let us then be more active in the service of Christ. It will be an awful thing to have lived in vain.

"For Christ's sake." Here is the motive power for our work. The world's motive is self-interest; or, in a word, *selfishness*! The Christian's motive is "for Christ's sake." St Paul correctly expresses this motive when he says, "the love of Christ constraineth us." Let us study to live out in our lives the teaching by our lives, and prove the doctrine true by its practical bearing upon us :—

"So let our lips and lives express,
The holy gospel we profess."

Jesus, the Master

"Ye call me Master, and ye say well, for so I am."—St John xiii. 13.

My dear children, you will have read in the history books at school all about the battle of Crecy, and will remember that it was fought between the French and English in the year 1346. Among those who fought on the French side was John, King of Bohemia. The French were defeated, and the Bohemian King was slain. Edward the Third and his son, the famous Black Prince, led the English, and when the battle was over they walked on the field and looked at the bodies of the slain. On the armour of the Bohemian King they found a German motto with these words "Ich Dien," which means. "I serve." The Black Prince was so much struck with the motto that he at once adopted it as his own, and it has been the motto of the Prince of Wales from that day to this. The young prince was so proud of his brave father, that he thought it quite an honour to wear upon his armour the words "I serve," thus proclaiming to everybody the fact that he was his father's servant. So good a son must have had a noble father, and so noble a father deserved so good a son. But if it was an honour to the Black Prince to serve his father, the King of England, how much greater an honour must it be to a boy or girl to serve Jesus Christ, the King of men and of Angels? All service is honourable if it be honourably done, but it is most honourable when it is done for an honourable master, and what master so honourable as the Lord Jesus? Now, in order to be good and useful servants there are many things we must do; we cannot give true and real service without taking thought and care in the matter. Three things are most important, and include all the rest. What are they? Finding a master, doing the work, receiving the wages. If you think the matter over, you will see that all that is meant by good service is contained in these three things. Let us apply them to the service of Jesus Christ.

I. We must Find our Master.—That is always the first thing to do. To find the master, to accept his service and to enter upon it, must always be done before we can do the work itself.

In the city in which I lived when I was a boy, they held every year three great gatherings, which the common people called "mops." They were, in reality, great hirings. Men and women, boys and girls, farmers and their wives came from far and near; the servants came to find masters, and the masters came to find servants. It was a fine time for the boys who went to school in the city. The streets were lined with ginger-bread and fancy cake-stalls, and in every open space shows, and hobby-horses, and swings were plying their noisy trade. But perhaps the best part of the fun was that which we had in watching the country lads and lasses. They

looked with open eyes of wonder upon everything they saw, and walked in a way that was a little amusing to boys who had always lived in the town; they were dressed in their very best, and some of it was very highly coloured; and every one of them carried a gay ribbon either in the hat, the bonnet, or some other conspicuous part of the dress. No doubt they worked hard all the year; the day of the "mop" was the only real holiday they got, and they enjoyed it—as I am sure you think they had a perfect right to do. But why did everyone wear a ribbon? In order to show the masters and mistresses that they were waiting to be hired. All of them were looking for service, and the first thing they had to do was to find a master. While they looked out for the masters the masters looked out for them. After a little inquiry and bargaining the engagement was made, a shilling was slipped into the hand of the servant, and the business of hiring was done—the servant had found his master and was ready to begin his work.

Now, my dear children, this whole world in which we dwell is one great hiring place; it is full of servants; every one of them belongs to one master or another. The servants need not carry a ribbon or wear any mark to show that they desire service, for all the masters who seek them know that full well. Satan knows it. He knows that everyone living must be the servant of somebody, that they cannot help it, and he does his utmost to get them to take service under him. He does not go about himself in a visible form and say to little boys and girls, or even to grown-up people, "Will you serve me?" If he did that we should know him, and be aware of him. But he sends his servants and friends into the market-place to do his work for him. And as his servants are, some of them at least, very pleasant and good-looking, people are not frightened of them, and thus Satan succeeds in hiring a great many servants. The Scriptures tell us that he is the prince, or ruler, of this world, so that all who live for this world alone are his servants, though many of them do not think so. He comes to them in a pleasant way, and so deceives them. When the little maiden looks into the mirror she sees a pleasant form there; bright eyes filled with sparkling life look out at her, and merry smiles and dancing curls cause her to laugh as she looks at her own picture. Then the thought comes, "Why should I not spend all my time in finding fine dresses for this little girl, and in giving her all the play and all the fun I can? She is worth it, I am sure." And thus the sweet child, who would make such a beautiful servant of Jesus, becomes a servant of selfishness—one of the worst of Satan's bad servants. When the bright schoolboy runs along the street or into the playground after lessons, he meets with a companion who tempts him off into evil ways. And thus he is led to his first falsehood, or to make his first theft, or take his first wrong step. It does not seem so bad to him as it does to others. He asks why he should not enjoy himself, or see what is to be seen; but for all that he is taking service under Satan, who knew he was to be hired, and who has followed him until he has hired him at last.

But there is another and a better Master walking to and fro in the market of life, and very anxiously looking after all the servants He can find. I need not tell you Who that Master is, for you already know that it is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is unlike all other masters, better by far than the very best of them. He does not hire them for His profit, but for their good. Ought we not at once to engage ourselves to so good a Master? Suppose the boys and girls that come to the hiring knew who the best masters were, those who would be most just, most kind, most generous, those

who would pay them best and feed them best, do you not think they would at once hire themselves to those masters? Of course they would, there is not a doubt about it. And if we are wise we shall take the Good Master, Christ Jesus, to be our Master, now and for ever. All who have tried Him have found out what a Good Master He is, and are very sorry they did not enter His service earlier than they did; I never heard of a single exception, for Jesus is so kind, so noble, so worthy a Master that He makes all His servants love Him. About four hundred years before our Saviour Jesus Christ was born into this world there lived in it a great teacher named Socrates. He taught daily in Athens, a city of Greece, and many young men came to learn of him. He was very good and wise, and had the art of making his pupils love him. They were so devoted to him that some of them were almost ready to die for him. One day they gathered all together in the hall where he taught them, and gave him some very costly presents. One brought him silver and another offered him gold, but there was one poor youth who had nothing to give. He loved his master dearly, and the thought that he had nothing to give him filled him with distress. Socrates saw it, and asked why he was sad. "Oh, most worthy master," replied the youth, "all your pupils save myself have offered you somewhat, one man has given after this manner and another after that, while I alone am so poor that I have nothing to give, unless," he added, with tears, "thou wilt accept myself." "Most noble youth," answered the teacher, "thou hast offered the best gift of them all, for all have something left even after their costly presents to me, but thou hast given me all in giving me thyself. I will accept thee from thyself, keep thee for thyself, and return thee to thyself, better than I found thee." That youth was named Æschylus, and he afterwards became one of the most renowned poets of ancient Greece. The pupil gave himself up to his master's service because he loved him, that is why we must serve Jesus; He gave Himself, so must we, for the poorest can give that; the master made the pupil a famous man, he did better for him than he could have done for himself, or than any other master could have done for him, and so will Jesus do for us. How many of His servants has He not made noble and good! Let us enter into His service without delay.

We must remember, however, that we shall never be in His service until we enter it, until we gladly accept Him as our Master. Many boys and girls make a mistake at this point. They do not resolve not to serve Jesus, and they seem to think that that is the same thing as resolving to serve Him, and thus they become the servants of some other master without intending to do so. At one of the "mops" to which I have referred, a curious thing happened. A youth desired to be a servant of a certain farmer who was very kind to his servants. But what did he do? Instead of going to this good farmer and hiring himself to him, he stood still in one spot nearly all the day. Many farmers spoke to him, but he denied them all, and when the day closed he found himself without master, either good or bad. Then he went to the good farmer when it was too late, and said to him, "I am your servant." "Oh, no," replied he, "I have hired all the servants I need, and you are not among the number." "But I have been keeping myself for you all day," said the youth. "I can't help that," answered the farmer, "you did not come to me, and you should have done that." Of course he should. So if we wish to be the servants of Jesus we must find Him, go to Him, accept Him, truly and really enter His service.

II. We must Do our Work.—What did the farmers hire their men for? Not to go home and sit in the chimney-corner in the winter, and

walk about in the fields in the summer, but to work; not to look at the cows, but to milk them; not to ride the horses, but to groom them and yoke them to the plough; not to talk about the corn, but to sow it, not to pass opinions upon the harvest, but to reap it. The one thing that servants must do is to work, if they cannot do that they are of no use at all.

And that is true of all servants, whether they serve an earthly master or a Heavenly one; in either case they must work. The Great Master Himself was a worker; He worked day and night, He talked about work, and He did it. "I must work," He said. He was often so busy in doing people good that He had no time to eat or to sleep. He loved workers, He hated idlers. He tells us a story (Luke xxi. 28, etc.) about a fine young man who was very polite but very lazy. His father told him to go and work in the vineyard. He said, "I go, sir." He treated his father with respect, for he called him sir; he said to him, in effect, of course I will do your will, why do you ask me, you need not, for I am quite ready to go without being asked: he was full of pretence but, alas, he was full of idleness. His fine words and fair speeches ended in nothing, he never went into the vineyard to work at all. He had a younger brother who, I am sorry to say, spoke roughly to his father, but he was afterwards sorry for his rude words, and showed his sincerity by doing his work. And Jesus was pleased with him rather than with his polite but idle brother. Jesus is only pleased with His servants when they work for Him. The Duke of Wellington once asked an old soldier, who had fought under him in the battle of Waterloo, how he would like to be dressed if he had to fight the battle over again? "Why," the old man answered, "I should like to be in my shirt-sleeves." The Duke was quite pleased with the answer, because it showed that the old man cared more about winning the battle than he did about being finely dressed. He had the true spirit of a worker in him. Work pays. "In all labour there is profit." An ounce of labour is worth a pound of talk. A worker does good to himself. If you mean to grow up cheerful, happy, hearty Christians you must begin to work for Jesus while you are young. Work will save you from the dreadful temptations that idleness will bring upon you. A worker does good to others. "She hath done what she could," said Jesus of the poor woman, and though it was little it counted in the great total of the world's work. "I mean to be a great man some day," said Johnny Large, as he strutted about the room, while quiet Willy Small sat still and did his lessons. The next morning the worker got the prize, and the talker got the cane. "I wish everybody loved Jesus," sighed one little girl, but another little girl that heard her carried a sixpence and a tract to the poor man who lived in the next street. Which of the little girls did the most good? Which did Jesus most love? The worker, of course. We can only please Jesus by working for Him.

And if we really wish to work for Him we shall soon find out the way to do it. We can do all our daily work for Him, in His spirit, and for His glory. Some years ago a rough and wicked farmer was brought from his sins to Christ. When one of his friends afterwards called to see him, he said, "I am going to put the name of the Lord Jesus on my carts and wagons; the horses, the sheep, and the cattle belonging to Him; I am going to work this farm for my Heavenly Master." That was the right spirit; that is one way in which we can serve Jesus. And there are many other ways. We can be kind to those about us, helpful to the poor, and do as much Christian work as awaits the doing. God will show us the way; but in some way we must work for Jesus.

III. We must Receive the Wages.—We must not work for our Heavenly Master simply for the sake of the wages; we must do it with higher and purer motives than that, chiefly, as I have already said, from love to the Master. Besides which, Jesus has already done so much for us that however much we may do for Him we shall always be in His debt. Can we ever repay our parents for all their care over us? Never! Nor can we ever repay the Good Saviour, for He has done much more for us than the best of parents ever did or ever can do. So that if Jesus gave no more than He has already given us, viz. His great love, He would have far more than repaid us for all we do for Him. But, over and above all the rest, He gives us wages for our work. Grand wages, too. Let me explain this to you by a little story taken from the life of a minister. One dark and dismal night, many years ago, this good minister had to go a long way from his home to preach. There was a perfect tempest abroad. The snow was falling, but as it fell it was caught by the wind and driven in small, keen particles with such great force that to walk was very difficult, while to hold an umbrella was impossible. The minister was strongly tempted to turn back rather than face the pitiless storm. As he thought of the people, however, and above all of the love of his Great Master he plodded sternly along. When he reached the place of worship he found but a poor congregation, the dreadful night had kept many away. Then he thought he would preach a very short sermon, and hurry home. But as he looked around he saw a number of boys, some of whom had been driven in by the bad weather, and he saw that they were very attentive. So he resolved to preach as well as ever he could. At the close of the service he spoke to several of these lads, and some four or five of them were so deeply affected that that very night they accepted Jesus as their Saviour and Friend. Weary and wet, the minister returned to his home, and soon forgot all about the lads and the service. But some years afterwards, he was sitting quietly in a meeting, listening to some young ministers who were telling the story of their conversion to God. Suddenly, he heard his name mentioned, and to his great surprise and joy, he found that one of the young ministers standing before him was one of those boys who had given themselves to Jesus on that dark and stormy night. That young minister is now a missionary.

Now look at the wonderful wages this minister received. He had the comfort of knowing that he had tried faithfully to do his duty. Who knows how much that was worth. He had the approval of his Master, the thanks and gratitude of the young man, the satisfaction of being God's instrument in starting a noble and useful life, and finally the minister and the missionary will meet in Heaven, and hear the Great Master say, "Well done." Oh what glorious wages! Are they not well worth working for? For all the work we do for Jesus, we shall receive good wages.

—*John Colwell.*

Critical Notes on the Gospel

Householder; the master of a family.

A Penny; Gr. *denarius*. This was a Roman silver coin equivalent to the Greek *drachma*, of the value of $13\frac{3}{4}$ cents. Ch. xxii. 20. It was the usual wages for a day's labour.

Third Hour.—Nine o'clock a.m.

The Market-place; the chief place of public resort in an Eastern city. Note Mark vii. 4.

Sixth and Ninth Hour.—Twelve and three o'clock.

Even.—The law required that a hired labourer should be paid at the close of his day's work. Deut. xxiv. 15. Compare Job vii. 2; Mal. iii. 5; Jas. v. 4.

Goodman of the House; i.e. the householder. "Goodman" is an old English phrase, equivalent to master; and was often used as an appellative, as "Goodman Smith"; fem., "Goodwife," or "Goody."

Lawful.—May I not pay my own money as I please?

Evil.—Envious.

So the Last.—This is the application of the parable, corresponding to ch. xix. 30.—*Few chosen*; few of the many who were called will exhibit that humility and renunciation of all self-righteousness which will prove that they are God's elect ones.

Anecdotes and Illustrations

God Calling Us.—To-day brings several holy lessons before us, but we will confine ourselves to that of the Gospel, and illustrate its teaching by a story from the bygone days of England. To realise it you must look back more than thirteen hundred years, and think of this country as in a very different state from the present. Instead of being peacefully governed by one Christian King, seven wild warlike kings, believers in Woden and Thor, divided it among them. Endless was their strife and warfare, and great the misery thus brought upon their subjects. In the year 533, Ella, King of Deira or Deer-land (the district between the Tees and Humber), died, leaving an infant son called Edwin. His neighbour Adelfrid, the cruel King of Bernicia or Bear-land (which corresponds in the main with the modern county of Durham), usurped Ella's kingdom, and carried off his orphan child to his own palace. If this was a place of hardship to Edwin, he profited by it, for he grew up manly and brave, and yet full of thought and feeling, with as many good qualities as we can imagine a heathen to possess. Adelfrid grew jealous of him, and plotted against his life, so he fled away and wandered about the country in the disguise of a peasant, till King Redwald of East Anglia (or the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk) took him in. At his court Edwin lived for some time in honour and esteem, employing himself not only in war and manly excercises, but in study. The usurper Adelfrid heard of his fame, and sent messengers to King Redwald, offering him a large sum of money if he would give him up, but otherwise threatening him with war. Redwald was terrified, and consented to betray his guest, on which one of his courtiers sought out Edwin and told him what had passed, begging him to fly for his life. But the noble-hearted Edwin could not bear to distrust one who had hitherto shown him kindness. "I cannot," he said, "be the first to break covenant with so great a king. If I must die, let him deliver me to death rather than another. And, indeed, whither should I fly, who have already wandered through every province of Britain, a hunted fugitive?" It was night when his friend left him, and Edwin went out and sat down alone in front of the palace, sad at heart and lonely. A stranger then, it is said, came up to him, and after telling him that he knew his sorrows and perplexities, cheered him with the hope of deliverance and prosperous days. "If this come to pass," he proceeded, "will you hearken and obey counsel regarding your salvation and eternal life?" Edwin promised to do so, and the stranger laid his right hand on his head, charging him by that token to remember the hour and the discourse. He went away, but Edwin still sat there deep in thought, and with the morning light the

courtier came again with the joyful news that the queen had dissuaded the king from his dishonourable intention, and that Redwald had defied Adelfrid and bade him do his worst. So they prepared for war, and a battle was fought between the kings on the banks of the Idle in Nottinghamshire. Redwald and Edwin fought bravely, Adelfrid was defeated and slain, and Edwin became master of his two kingdoms. After a time, when his friend Redwald died, the East Anglians offered him their crown also, and he conquered other parts of England; so that, finally, almost all of it except Kent belonged to Edwin, the lord of Britain. In Kent, meanwhile, much had been passing. The great missionary St Augustine had preached the Gospel there, and had converted and baptised its king, Ethelbert, and many of his subjects. To this little kingdom did Edwin look for a wife, asking for the hand of Ethelberga, the daughter of Ethelbert. At first it was refused him, because a Christian maiden ought not to marry a heathen, but on his promising to respect her religion, and to embrace it should it prove more worthy than his own, she was sent to him, under the charge of the holy bishop Paulinus. And now Edwin was brought very near to the vineyard—a Christian queen at his side, a Christian bishop at his court, but still he hung back from changing his religion. The next year, on one and the same day, a daughter was born to him, and he was wonderfully preserved from death by assassination. While he was giving thanks for these mercies to his idol-gods, Paulinus came forward and claimed his gratitude for the true God from Whom they flowed. Edwin's heart was touched; he listened, promised to receive instruction, and as a pledge of his sincerity delivered his new-born daughter to the bishop for Baptism. After this he spent much time in listening to Christian teaching, much in silent thought, for his mind was still clouded with doubts, till one day Paulinus, coming in, laid his hand on his head and asked him whether he remembered that token. Edwin trembled and almost fell to the ground while the bishop went on, "See, by God's help you have been saved from your enemies and raised to the kingdom. Take heed you delay not to embrace His faith and keep His commandments, that He may free you from all evil, and raise you to a Heavenly Kingdom." And Edwin answered, "Instruct me, for I am ready to submit to the faith of Christ." But not alone would the king enter Christ's vineyard; his courtiers and nobles must hear the summons too. He assembled them near York in solemn conclave, and there he sat among them and held counsel whether they should indeed cast their father's gods to the owls and bats, and submit to Christ's yoke. Coifi, his chief priest, spoke first, and said frankly that he had found neither power nor profit in his old religion; he had followed it diligently, but gained nothing by it, while others who had slighted it had prospered more than he; so he advised that they should try the new faith. Next an aged noble rose up, and spoke sadly of the ignorance in which their present religion left them as to the world to come. "O king," he said, "often when we sit in winter round your blazing hearth, a sparrow will pass quickly across the hall, flying in at one door and out at the other; but whence it comes none can tell, nor whither it goes. Even so man has a little share in the brightness of this life, but we know not what came before or what shall follow." After this the good Paulinus rose up and preached Jesus Christ to those yearning hearts. The Divine seed fell into good ground; they heard and were converted. The eager Coifi, calling for a horse and arms (things forbidden to a heathen priest), rode at full speed towards the idol-temple and flung his spear into it. The temple and its idols were burnt, the Christian faith was taught throughout the land, and a wooden church built at York, in which Edwin and many of his subjects were baptised on Easter

Sunday, A.D. 627. At the sixth hour, in the noon of life was King Edwin called into the vineyard, and he proved no idle labourer. He gave his heart and mind to the care of his kingdom, and brought it into a state of such order that it was commonly said a woman and her young infant might travel through it safely without fear of molestation. Desirous of the best interests of his people, he made many missionary journeys with Bishop Paulinus. At one place in Northumberland they were delayed thirty-six days while Paulinus catechised his converts, and baptised them in the River Glen; and on the banks of the Swale they remained yet longer, so many Yorkshiremen flocked round them for Christian teaching and baptism.

Thus did Edwin pass six years; then the Lord of the vineyard released him from his labours. A rebellion broke out, headed by two heathen chiefs who hated the new religion; a battle was fought at Heathfield on the Don, and the great King Edwin was slain, on the 12th October, A.D. 633.

More blessed are we than Edwin, in that we were placed in Christ's vineyard in our unconscious childhood; but alas! we are too unmindful of the blessing and often neglect the work which is given us to do. Then in mercy the Lord of the vineyard speaks to us again. By sorrow alike and joy, by sickness, by poverty, by the loss of friends, by His Holy Word, and the lips of His ministers, again and again He calleth us. Let us listen to His voice, let us listen for it, and, hearing it, let us answer like Samuel of old, "Speak Lord, for Thy servant heareth."

The Need for Willing Service.—An Arab beggar used to sit at the gate of a rich man's house, on whose bounty he depended, and from whom he received daily alms. One day his patron wished to send a letter in a hurry, and seeing the beggar, asked him to deliver it. The beggar drew himself up and said, "I solicit alms. I don't run errands" We have been soliciting alms from God all our lives, and yet how unwilling we are to convey His messages of salvation or do any other service for Him.

Reward for Duty.—A missionary in China was greatly depressed by the carelessness of his hearers. One day the words of Isaiah liii. 1, came to his mind as sent from above, and they were followed by a dream. He thought he was standing near a rocky boulder, and trying with all his might to break it with a sledge-hammer; but blow after blow had no effect—there was no impression made. At length he heard a voice which said, "Never mind, go on. I will pay you all the same whether you break it or not." So he went on doing the work that was given him and was content.

What a Child May Do.—A little boy said to his mother, "I should like to have lived in the time of our Saviour that I might have worked for Him." His mother asked, "What would you have done?" He replied, "I would have run everywhere, doing His errands."

Duty First.—They asked Confucius, "What is shameful in a government official?" "To think only of his salary in serving the prince. A superior man will put duty first and pay last."

Work for All.—A good minister preached a powerful sermon upon the words, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" The sermon did good to many, among whom was a lady, who went to the minister next day and said, "Doctor, I want a spade." We should be happy to put spades into the hands of all our idle friends. There are Sunday-school spades, mission-room spades, sick-visitation spades, etc.

Murmuring at Wages.—Pay a man ever so liberally he will still murmur; he looks at the money, and then at your face, and says, "*Pothathu*"; that is, "Not sufficient." He tells you a long story about what he has done and suffered, about the great expense he has been at to oblige you, and he

entreats you for a little more. I ask any Englishman who has been in India if he ever met with a Hindoo who was not at all times ready to murmur?

GRUMBLERS.—"On our breakfast table on Sunday mornings there is always a coffee-pot and a tea-pot, because I like tea, and the Person in Authority, the Angel-who-attends-to-things, likes coffee. She says that it keeps her awake during my dry sermons. The coffee-pot is tall and thin, with a straight spout at one side and a handle at the other. The tea-pot is fat and round, and both are very shiny. One Sunday morning I was a little down in the mouth and was not engaging in conversation as a properly-brought-up husband ought to do, but was looking straight in front of me. And I suddenly awoke to the fact that I was looking into the side of the coffee-pot; and you should have seen my face! Very long-drawn-out, and thin, and sad, and solemn. I was horrified, and begged the Person in Authority to put the tea-pot at my side and take the coffee-pot away. And what a difference it made! In the tea-pot I found I had a round, jolly face, with a smile that would have done you all good to see, and big, bright eyes, and such cheeks! Well, if any of you have got a coffee-pot face, do your best to get a tea-pot face. And try and look at life through a tea-pot and not through a coffee-pot. It is the same life, but it makes a big difference how you look at it."—*Rev. E. Lewis, M.A., B.D.*

FIRST LAST; LAST FIRST.—We read a pretty story of St Anthony, who, being in the wilderness, led there a very hard and strait life, insomuch that none at that time did the like, to whom came a voice from Heaven, saying, "Anthony, thou art not so perfect as is a cobbler that dwelleth at Alexandria." Anthony, hearing this, rose up forthwith, and took his staff, and went till he came to Alexandria, where he found the cobbler. The cobbler was astonished to see so reverend a father come to his house. Then Anthony said unto him, "Come, and tell me thy whole conversation, and how thou spendest thy time?" "Sir," said the cobbler, "as for me, good works have I none, for my life is but simple and slender. I am but a poor cobbler. In the morning, when I rise, I pray for the whole city wherein I dwell, especially for all such neighbours and poor friends as I have; after I set me at my labour, where I spend the whole day in getting my living; and I keep me from all falsehood, for I hate nothing so much as I do deceitfulness; wherefore, when I make to any man a promise, I keep it and perform it truly. And thus I spend my time poorly with my wife and children whom I teach and instruct, as far as my wit will serve me, to fear and dread God. And this is the sum of my simple life." In this story you see how God loveth those that follow their vocation, and live uprightly, without any falsehood in their dealing. Anthony was a great holy man; yet this cobbler was as much esteemed before God as he.—*Bishop Latimer.*

Questions on the Gospel

1. Who does the householder typify? 2. How much was a Roman penny? 3. What is meant by God's vineyard? 4. What work are Christians called upon to do in God's vineyard? 5. What was this parable intended to teach? 6. What incident had occurred before our Saviour had delivered this parable? 7. What question did Peter then ask? 8. What was the more general application of this parable?

Books of Reference

Bruce's "Parabolic Teaching," and "The Training of the Twelve"; "Cambridge Bible"; "Expositor's Bible"; "Century Bible"; *Edersheim's*

"Jesus the Messiah"; *Geikie's* "Life and Words of Christ"; Thomson's "Land and Book"; *Hasting's* "Dictionary of the Bible."

The Epistle

1 Corinthians ix. 24-27.

The Race

"*So run that ye may obtain.*"—1 *Cor. ix.* 24.

What a thrilling sight a race is! Have you not watched a boat-race—? You remember one race in which all England and our Colonies take such a keen interest—and you have run races yourselves, or watched them at school sports. Well, whether you have been only a looker-on or a runner in these, there is a race we talk of to-day in which we *must* take our part, for we are on the race-course, we are already started. Give Scripture words which mention our race? "Let us run with patience the race which is set before us."

But three special races we will talk of to-day. I. The Race for Life. II. The Race for Love. III. The Race for a Prize. Can you recall a scene taken from Old Testament times of a terribly anxious race for life? One man running for life, another pursuing, just as eager. One false step, one look back, and the first runner is lost. In front, the city gates wide open, and inside perfect safety.

Another scene we too can picture, taken from earlier times than this. Four people starting from a burning town, hurrying to save their lives. Four left the city, but only three arrived in safety at the little city on the mountain side.

And to you and to me comes the same warning message to-day. "Escape for thy life."

Pilgrim, in the "Pilgrim's Progress," was bidden to *run* from the city of destruction. No time to lose; we do not know if we have many days of life left in which to run this race from death to eternal life, from uncertainty and peril into the refuge for sinners—the Saviour Who is always waiting to receive those who come unto Him.

To-day the race-course lies still open before us, *now* is the time to flee. Behind us lie ruins, death, and judgment. In front of us stands the Rock of Ages with its ever open shelter.

How often, even in this life, we need a sure refuge. There was a blind girl once, who loved her Bible, and used to read it with her fingers tracing out the raised letters. God sent her a severe illness, which at length left her so weakened and shattered that she had entirely lost the use of her fingers. Then it seemed to her as if her *all* was gone. No more help for her in her daily race, no more comfort and delight in her quiet times. She felt almost in despair; but she knelt and asked for help and grace that she might feel satisfied with God's ways. As she rose from her prayer, she once more raised the old loved Bible to her lips, to kiss it before she laid it aside as useless to her for the future; but as her lips pressed the page, she found that the lips could feel as the fingers used to feel, and she felt sure that with practice she could with her lips again spell out the loved message. Truly God was her refuge.

II. The Race for Love.—Can you draw me a mental picture of that race? Two men running to find the one they loved best—their Master. It was an early morning hour, and the two friends had started with the one thought absorbing all others—to find again the Friend they had lost. Early rising, haste, weariness, all was nothing, if only they might find Him. Have we ever shared in that race? A longing, ceaseless seeking to find that Saviour for our own, to see Jesus? Have we spared some time from sleep, risen earlier to try and meet Him? So seeking we shall find, for "He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

God's Word is such a great help in making our daily race a race for love. "Thy Word do I love," said David. I have heard of a poor cottager who once was much surprised by a visitor making this brief remark as she left the cottage door one day, "You have such a treasure here, look for it, don't give up till you have found it." The poor old soul hunted high and low, early and late—she peeped under the old boards to see if any chest or bag were hidden there—all in vain. Searching, she came one day upon her old dusty Bible; she took a look inside the cover—"Thy Word do I love" was written there by hands long since dead. So the old Book was read to see what could have made the writer care so much for that Bible as to actually love it; and reading, the poor old woman found out that a living Friend might be her own, and a mansion was preparing even for her. Ah! thought she, here's indeed a treasure I never thought of before; and with her heart full of the new-found gladness she spent many an hour—saved from her sleep, or snatched from busy working times—just to look for another and another message of comfort from the treasure Book. Her daily race was run then with a loving heart, and though the goal was nearly reached, yet all the last bit of the stage was gladdened by the presence of the Master.

III. The Race for a Prize.—"They which run in a race run all; but *one* receiveth the prize. So run that ye may obtain."

Here we must have an early start and a straight road if we think of winning. You know how in a race every hindrance is cast off, the coat or hat thrown aside; and standing in rank with the others, each man intends to start well and to run with all his might.

You stand to-day on a race-course, many are side by side with you, but have you started? Have you really begun to press on towards God's prize—begun each day with God? If so, your work, or lessons, or play, or errands, will all be stages of the one life race—one ended, then another begun. You will eagerly press forward to do each thing with all your might.

Then about the straight road. You remember how Christian in the "Pilgrim's Progress" turned aside out of the pathway, and so was caught, placed in that terrible dungeon of old giant Despair; and there in the dismal cell, with no power to open the fast-locked door, he prayed to God. Soon came the answer—the key was found, the door open, and the prisoners free, but oh, how they wished they had never left the straight road—the king's highway! A little forgetfulness of God, a hurrying over our daily prayer, a missing of our daily verse—these are the first little wandering steps.

Then remember that in an earthly race all run, but only one receives a prize. Our God provides a prize for each runner; but we must run as if we meant to win, and let nothing hinder us in the course. Keeping daily very near to God by prayer and reading are grand helps for keeping our feet on the right pathway. Old St Chrysostom was a grand example of an unswerving racer. Threatened by the emperor with banishment if he would not give up his religion, he replied, "Thou canst not banish me, for the whole world is my Father's house." Loss then of all his goods was threatened.

"Well," said the old man, "my treasure is in Heaven, you cannot rob me." Every friend shall be taken from thee, and thou shalt find thyself in utter loneliness. "Not so, oh king, for I have a Friend from Whom thou canst not separate me—a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother." Then came the cruel threat of death, a lonely and a bitter death, for the old saint, but still St Chrysostom was faithful and swerved not from the narrow way. "My life, oh king, is hid with Christ in God, therefore death itself cannot harm me."

You see the brave old man seemed to see the very prize itself in view. Let us ask God to give us His help to start now upon the race, to keep always in the straight road; and to keep for us, and often in our view, the certain prize which He has promised to all them that love Him.

The Way Home

"*Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith.*"—*Heb. xii.* 1, 2.

These words speak about a race, and about a cloud of witnesses. What is meant here by witnesses? It means those who are looking on at something that is being done. And when the writer of this verse speaks of a cloud of witnesses, he means a very large number. Every year there is a great boat-race on the River Thames. People come from all parts of London to see it. They are the witnesses, or the lookers-on. And as they stand close together on the banks, we might very well compare them to clouds, and say, "The rowers in the race have a cloud of witnesses looking at them." And when there is a great horse-race, thousands of people go to see the horses run. On the race-course there is a large wooden building with seats one above another, where hundreds of people sit to see the race. When they are closely packed together in the grand-stand, as it is called, they may very well be compared to a cloud. They are so close and so high up that they look like a cloud. Then the text speaks of a race set before us. The Apostle speaks as though everybody had to run in a race, does he not? Yes, that is just what he means. He calls our life in this world a race, because we have to try hard to do right, just as a racer has to try hard if he wants to win the prize. And he says we are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses—that there are many people looking at us as we run. He wishes to show us that all the good people who have lived in the world, and are now in Heaven, are like the people who look on in a race. They are looking now upon us who are in the world, to see if we are running to gain the prize of eternal life. We will talk first about the witnesses, and then about the runners.

I. Those Who are now Witnesses have all been Runners.—In the chapter before these verses, you will see who is meant by the witnesses—men and women and children who had faith in God, and who, because they trusted in Him and loved Him, tried to serve Him. That is what is meant by running the race for Heaven. Many of them are here mentioned by name—there is Abel, and Noah, and Abraham, and many others—some of whom we are told in the end of the chapter suffered imprisonment and dreadful deaths, or were driven out of their homes into the deserts or the mountains, rather than give up their faith in God. So that all these witnesses who are now in Heaven once lived in this world. There are many men and women in this country who are now living in grand and beautiful houses who were born in little cottages. So the good men and women and children who are now living in God's beautiful world where there is no need of the sun or of the moon, because God's brightness makes it light, were not born

there. They did not first begin to live in Heaven. They lived first on this earth, where you and I live to-day. They were not born good any more than we were. They became good in this world by the help of God, and by trying hard themselves too. Look in the seventh chapter of the Book of the Revelation, and see what a large number there is. In the ninth verse John says, "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and with palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." The numbers that made the cloud of witnesses are so great that no man can count them; but of all that great number, every one was born upon the earth, and they have all been runners. Abel was the first man who got to Heaven. He had a very short run, and he got in first because his brother killed him. His brother did not think when he killed him that he was going to send him to such a beautiful place. When anybody wins a race, you know the people all shout. I think the Angels all gave a shout when Abel came in. They were glad to think that he had been so true and noble—that God had got a new child, a man out of this world. Moses had a much longer run. He had a forty years' run in Egypt, most of the time in the palace of Pharaoh's daughter. Then he had to run forty years as a shepherd in the land of Midian, and forty years in the wilderness. Altogether, you see, Moses had to run one hundred and twenty years before he came in a winner. Because Moses had such a long run, and ran so well, God let him come back to his old home again, to this world, two thousand years afterwards, when he came back and talked with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, about His death for us all. Can you tell me of anyone who had a longer run than Moses? Yes; Enoch lived three hundred and sixty-five years, and came in a winner without dying. For of him it is said that "he was translated that he should not see death." And who had the longest run of any man of whom we know? Methuselah, Enoch's son. Of him we read in the Book of Genesis that "his days were nine hundred sixty and nine years." That was indeed a long run. But you know some in Heaven who had a very short run in this world. Some of you have little brothers and sisters who could hardly be said to have run the race at all: God took them home to Heaven when they were only a few years, or perhaps only a few months old. But even these little ones were here long enough to know that earth was a place of pain and sickness, and to know how much better it is for them to be in Heaven, where there is no pain, nor sorrow, nor dying. But whether these witnesses had a long race or a short one, they all had to run a little while in this world; and if they were old enough to understand, they tried to be good and to serve God here, or they would not be in Heaven now.

II. These Witnesses Who have been Runners want You to win the Race too.—If your brother were in a race, and you had won a prize, and you were now looking on while he ran, would you not want him to win too? When you have had an examination at school, and have got a prize, and there is to be another examination in which your sister is going to compete, don't you hope she will take one too? Yes, I am sure you do. You want them to win because you love them, because you all belong to one family. Now, the good who have gone from earth to Heaven, and those who are now trying to serve God on the earth, belong to the same family. The Apostle Paul tells us that all disciples of Jesus Christ, whether in Heaven or in earth, make but one family. The youngest of us who, by turning from sin and trying to overcome it, have begun to run the race for the prize of eternal life,

are said to belong to Heaven even now, to belong to the Heavenly Jerusalem, to the city of the living God, to the spirits of just men made perfect (Eph. iii. 15; Heb. xii. 22)—that is, to all the good and great who have ever lived. We are counted as part of the family to which Enoch, and Abraham, and Moses, and Paul belong; and, best of all, we belong to Jesus Christ Himself, Who once lived in this world as a runner in order to be able to help us to run now. And they all want us to win too.

III. Every Runner must mind Three Things.—1. They must not carry heavy weights. The text says to us, "Lay aside every weight." If you have ever seen a boat-race, you have noticed, I dare say, that the boat was a very light one, and seemed to glide over the water like a feather. And you have noticed that the rowers have very little clothes on: nothing loose hangs about them that might get in their way; their arms and chests are only covered with a light rowing shirt. If each man in the boat had two or three iron weights tied round his waist, do you think the boat would glide over the water so quickly? No, indeed; the boat and the men would all sink together. Each man makes himself as light as he can. Before a horse-race, the men who ride the horses are weighed, and the lighter they are the better, because the horses of course can get along all the faster. A man who was very fat and heavy would not be allowed to ride in the race: he would be too much weight for the horse to carry. Sometimes when we go out for a school-treat the boys and girls run races for a prize. If you were going to run, and you started with a pocketful of stones, and after you had gone about ten yards you found yourself passed, first by one and then by another, what would you do? I know what I should do. I should make myself lighter. How could you do that? Lay aside the stones. I think I see you dropping one stone after another all the way along the course, and every time you drop a stone you get a little more ahead—you gain a little upon your companions. And when you have left all the stones behind you push on, and presently find yourself in the midst of the best runners. Now you are straining every limb, and those who are watching—the cloud of witnesses—see the boy that was last catching up him that was first, and they clap you and say to one another, "He will win, he will win." Now you are foot to foot with the boy who took the lead and has kept it all the way, you are putting him upon his mettle, and he begins to find that after all, he may lose. Then you have left him a foot behind, and you say to yourself, "Now for it, now or never," and in another minute you, who were last, have won the race. Now, tell me why you won? Because you threw away the stones. You laid aside every weight, and then your feet carried you over the ground with the greatest ease. Were those stones of any use to you? Were they worth anything? Did you lose anything by throwing them away? No; they were worth nothing, they only hindered you. It was much better to throw them away than to keep them in your pocket. The weights that we are to throw away in our race of life are sins which, like so many heavy stones, will prevent us from winning the race, from entering Heaven. When you begin to try and obey the Saviour, you find that you have many sinful habits, which, like stones in your dress, pull you back and weigh you down, and you cannot be as good as you would like to be. Now, you cannot cast them away all at once, but you can little by little. Jesus will Himself help you to cast aside these weights. You will find that each day you ask Him to help you, it will not be so hard to be good. Sometimes people who have found it very hard to be good at first, by the help of Jesus cast away first one sinful habit and then another, and get quite ahead of most people who are Christians. Every day we must try and overcome some sin which prevents us from running as fast as we might

do to the city of God. When a ship at sea is very heavily laden—when she is full of all kinds of merchandise that she is bringing from one country to another—she is very low in the water. I have seen a vessel in the Atlantic whose deck came so near to the level of the sea that it seemed as if a little child might step from the water into the ship. And if there comes a heavy storm, the waves dash quite over the deck and come on with an angry roar that seems to say, "I will sink you and tear you to pieces." Then the captain says, "We must lighten the ship. We must throw into the sea all that nice spice, and all those chests of tea, and those bales of silk. We must either cast them overboard or we shall all go to the bottom." And then, if you are on board, you would see the sailors throwing over every weight that hindered the vessel from winning the battle with the winds and the water, and as they did so, you would see that it is with a ship as it was with you and the stones—every weight that was cast away would lift her a little more out of the water, until presently she would be able to ride on the top of the waves that before seemed as if they must sink her. And so it is in running the race here spoken of—we cannot get on unless we throw sin overboard. There is one weight which we are specially told to throw away, and it is the very one that we shall find it hardest to get rid of. What is that? "The sin which so easily besets us." You all know what a violin is. Do you know how many strings it has? Four. Are they all of the same thickness? No: the first string is the thinnest. If you were to play the violin every day for a year, and to play on all the strings, which do you think would be most likely to break first? The thin one. Yes. Did you ever have a bow and arrows? Yes, I dare say you have. And when you shot the arrow, where did you place it, in the middle of the string, or at the side? In the middle. And when you had used the bow a good while, where would the string be most worn? In the middle, would it not? Yes, it would break there first. So it is with you. There is one part of your character that is weaker than the rest, there is one way in which you are more likely to go wrong than in others. When any boy finds out that he has a good many faults, he finds that there is one fault of which he is guilty more than any other. It may be that he is given to say things that are untrue, or he may be very easily angry, or he may be very much inclined to be idle—whatever sinful habit is the hardest to throw away, that is his besetting sin: it is like the weak part of the bow-string, which is the most easily broken. And this is the sin which we must try the most to lay aside. 2. They must run with patience. It is of no use to begin a race and leave off in the middle, is it? No; we might as well never set out at all. If we are going to try for a prize at the next school examination, you must not work half through the lessons and then give it up. After you have done half, it would be a great pity not to persevere and go on to the end. But to do that, you must have patience. Some young people make up their minds to be disciples of Jesus, to set out on the race towards Heaven; but they get tired of trying: they feel it is nice to be good, but they have not patience enough to try every day and all the day. But whatever we begin to do, it will be of little use unless we go on with patience. If a boy begins to learn arithmetic, and leaves off when he can only do an addition sum, will he ever be fit for an office? No. Or if a girl wants to learn to sew nicely, will it be of any use if she only sets a few stitches? No. Whatever we begin to do, if we are to get any good by it, we must have patience to go on with it. And so in running this race. We shall never win unless we try day after day, until the last day of our lives, to cast away sin and so to become fit for the society of Heaven. 3. We must run "looking unto Jesus." This is the most important thing of

all, for we cannot do the other two unless we do this. We cannot throw away the weight of sin, we cannot run with patience, unless we look to Jesus. If you wanted to be a very good swimmer you would have to learn by seeing others swim. Would it not be a good way to learn if you could know how Captain Webb swam across the English Channel? Would it not be a good plan if you could see him swim and read some of his directions, seeing he has shown himself to be such a great swimmer and able to swim farther than anybody else? Then you know you could see how he did it, and try to imitate him. A king of Hungary was one day out in the country with some of his friends, and there came down a heavy fall of snow. It got so deep, and it was so hard to walk that the king's friends said they must lie down in the snow, they were too tired to go any farther. But the king knew that if they did lie down they would go to sleep and perish with the cold. So he said, "I will go first and make a path with my feet, and then you can put your feet where mine have been, and it will not be so hard for you." And so they did, and so they got home. You see the king had more courage and more strength than they had and because they walked looking unto him, they were saved. Jesus is here called the Author and Finisher of our faith—which means that He has run the race first Himself, and so has made a path for us. Jesus lived here and ran His race without sinning once. No one has ever done that but Himself. And so He is the best Example that we can look at; He it is Whom we must try to follow. And if we do look, He will help us, He will make the path easier for us. If you want to run so as to win, you must to look to Him by reading what He did when He was here—how He obeyed His parents, how He resisted Satan, how He prayed for His murderers. You must look to Him by speaking to Him and asking Him to help you to run. You must look to Him when you have fallen in the race; when you have done wrong you must ask Him to forgive you. I know, because I have tried, that without Him we can do nothing good, we cannot run the race. All the winners in Heaven have won their prize by "looking unto Jesus," and none can ever do it without His example and His help.

Weights

"Let us lay aside every weight."—Heb. xii. 1

Long ago, people had their games just as you have now. And many of their games were like your own. They were fond of running. Paul, in his letters, often refers to these games, and especially to the race, to illustrate what he is saying. Just as the Lord Jesus often referred to what was going on around, and was familiar to everybody—to the fields with their grass or growing corn in spring or harvest, to the vine and the fig-tree which were to be seen almost at every door, to the hen and chickens, and the sparrow, and the sheep, and many things else which everybody knew about—in order to make His teaching plainer and more interesting, so we may believe it was with Paul, in his preaching, as it was in his letters. He knew all about the games of which I have spoken. I can well believe that, as a boy, he had watched the runners with deepest interest, and joined in the applause with which the winner was greeted. The text which I have chosen for this address contains an allusion to these runners.

Let me call up a scene with which most young people are familiar. The day of the games has come. Great preparations have been made. Flags are flying. Bands of music are playing. Crowds of people are gathered in holiday dress. The boys are all on the alert. And now the hour has come for the race. The competitors strip. Every article of clothing they can spare

is laid aside. The lightest dress that can be got is worn. The cap is laid aside, the jacket and waistcoat, the heavy boots. The pockets are emptied, if there are pockets at all; money, keys, watch, ornaments of every kind, are thrown aside. No one would ever dream of carrying any heavy things at such a time. To be as light as possible, is everyone's aim. If a boy wishes to run to the best advantage, so as to come in first and win the prize, you will see him casting off everything that might hinder. And if anyone were to ask him about his preparations for running, and what he did in order to make the best of it, he might describe himself in the words of our text, as—"Laying aside every weight."

These races only take place at distant intervals. It would not do to have them every day or often. And only some boys care about them, or can be at the trouble to take part in them. The boys who do not run carry all their "weights" about them. They wear their heavy clothing, and have their pockets filled. They have no inducement to do otherwise. They feel that there is no need, in their case, for "laying aside every weight."

But there is a race which all of you must run, and which you must run every day. Your daily life is such a race. Many who wish to run well, come short, because they carry so many "weights." They made a hopeful beginning and ran well so far. But they were hindered and kept back by having too much to carry, and at length they broke down and stopped altogether. I have a great wish to help you to run your race well, and so I shall try to show you what some of the weights are which are now hindering or are likely to hinder you, and I shall do what I can to induce you to "lay them aside."

My two heads, then, are two questions—What are the "weights" that hinder us? and, What is to be done with them?

I. The "Weights"—what are they? What are the things that hinder us in running the race of life? There are many of these, and I can only speak of some of them. There is—1. The "weight" of unforgiven sin. How that hinders many. You have offended a father or teacher or friend—done something wrong—you have been guilty of disobedience or untruthfulness or dishonesty. How heavy it is. What a weight and burden it is. If it has not been found out, it lies like lead on your heart. You are in constant terror. You read your guilt in every eye. Your conscience is constantly reminding you of the wrong you have done. Sometimes this "weight" is so heavy that you feel as if you could not carry it any longer, and must sink under the burden of it. How it hinders you in everything you put your hands to!

Or the fault has been discovered, and you are in disgrace. Your dearest friends are vexed and displeased. Your father and mother keep up a painful reserve. They do not give you the old welcome—the hearty "good morning" or "good night"—the parting kiss. You feel as if there were a great gulf between you and them. You are unhappy. You are miserable. Everything is a burden. Your schoolfellows wonder what is the matter with you. You are losing your place in the class, tumbling down from dux to booby. You have no heart for play. The very sunshine seems to mock you, and the birds as they sing so merrily. You do not care for your food. Your nights are disturbed. You have strange dreams. You start up in your sleep. Your companions ask if you are ill. You cannot get on with anything. You are just like one weighed down under a heavy burden. Whether it is work or play, company or solitude, there is a weight dragging you down in all. You know you have done wrong. You need no one to remind you of it, or to condemn you for it. You condemn yourself. And as everything

comes to a stand, and it is just as when a double load is put on a wagon, which the horse cannot draw, I might explain it all as the "weight" of an unforgiven fault. When once forgiveness comes, how light you feel—almost as if you could fly. You can do anything. You are like a bird out of its cage. Your chain is broken. The "weight" is gone.

Now if it is so with sin as committed against man, what shall we say of sin as committed against God! You may not think very much about your sin, in this view of it. It may not cause you very much distress. But still it is there. And it stands written against you. There are times when you cannot shut out the thoughts of it. When conscience awakes, when some danger threatens, when you are ill, when you think of dying and appearing before God, oh how great your sin appears, and what a heavy weight it is. If you were to speak out what you think or feel, it would be—"I am unpardoned. God is angry with me every day. I have no peace, no rest, no hope. I can do nothing to please God so long as I am unforgiven. O my sin! my sin!" Even some of you who are very young, and who do not think very much, know something of this.

How different your life would be if your sin were all forgiven; how different your worship would be; how different your work would be! Your fear would be gone. Your heart would be full of gratitude and love. You would be able to sing, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" The sense of God's love would be to you what the sunshine is to the earth, giving life and beauty and gladness to everything. It would give you power. It would help you every way. You sometimes say you want to be good, and you cannot. This would help you more than anything else. It is the first real step to being good. If that weight were only removed, how different all would be!

2. The "weight" of unsubdued sin. I shall try to explain what I mean by this. I shall suppose we are setting out on a long voyage. We have storms and contrary winds to contend with, and sometimes icebergs and dangerous rocks and opposing currents. But we have what is even worse than these. Some of the ship's crew are mutinous. They will not obey orders. They try to set the other sailors up against the captain. They damage the ship's machinery. They reverse the engines. They put out the fires. They do everything they can to provoke and hinder. And the consequence is, the ship's progress is seriously interfered with. Sometimes she comes to a stand altogether. In any case the voyage is slow and uncomfortable, as compared with what it should have been. At times, it seems as if all on board must go to the bottom. Now what is wanted is, that the mutineers should be subdued—mastered, changed into obedient and right-hearted seamen, or put in irons and kept from doing harm. So long as they are unsubdued, they are a "weight" that seriously hinders.

The other day I saw a number of people standing, all looking eagerly in one direction, as if they were afraid something serious was going to happen. I found, on coming up, that it was the trial of a young horse in a horse-breaker's machine. Yoked with it was a quiet-going animal, which pulled steadily as could be. But the other reared and plunged, ran forward and then stopped. And while the man who drove the pair held the reins and the whip as if he would be master, and as if the struggle could only come to one end, other people were afraid it would come to mischief. The unsubdued horse was a serious hindrance, and if it had been a real journey which the driver wished to make, the subduing of the restive animal would have been simply indispensable.

Now, is there no "weight," no hindrance of this kind, with you? Is

there no stubborn will that resists and disobeys, and must needs be broken. if things are to get on at all? What of your temper that bursts into passion on the slightest provocation, and in words or looks or actions gets outlet to itself, in a way that may well alarm? What of your pride and vanity? What of your selfishness, that disregards others and is always seeking your own gratification and pleasure? What of secret sins, which you try to conceal and cover over, but which are always growing stronger, and if unsubdued will go on as they are doing, burning like a fire within, and eating out your very heart and soul? So long as these have the power which they have now, every now and then getting the better of you, your life can neither be happy nor good. It will be more or less like the ship with the mutinous seamen on board, or like the carriage with the untamed horse. These sins of yours must be subdued, overcome, mastered. Otherwise, I need not tell you how they must hinder. Let me just take a boy with a bad temper—hot, fiery, uncontrolled. If that boy goes on as he has begun, he will be a plague to himself and to everybody else. He will never have done getting into difficulties and scrapes and trouble. Even if he is a Christian, that temper of his will hinder his progress, and mar his usefulness, and prevent his being and doing what otherwise he might have been and done.

Each of us has some sin that specially hinders us—that is our "weight." Examine and see what is yours, and say, does it not sadly keep you back? With some, it is indolence. With some, it is the tendency to deceive, the want of straightforwardness—of being out and out truthful. With some, it is yielding to unkind, unforgiving, resentful, jealous feelings. I need not attempt to go over all the different sins. But whatever be your sin, one thing I am sure of, that it is sadly keeping you back. And it is always getting the longer the worse. Sins, like most other things, get strength as they grow older. Just think of a sin that has lived and ruled for ten or twenty years, what strength it must have! It is just as with a tree. At first, it is a mere sapling, which it would not be so difficult to break or tear up. But every year makes it more difficult, till, after many years have passed, it is almost impossible. Youth is the time for getting sins subdued. It is by far the best and most hopeful time. If you go on, with these sins of yours in full force, God only knows what the result may be. I do not know anything about which every boy and girl should be more anxious, than getting the power of their sin broken—thoroughly subdued in early life. What a help it is ever after.

3. The "weight" of evil habits. I do not refer so much here to single acts that are out and out bad and sinful. I refer more to things that may seem so far harmless at the beginning, but are apt to be repeated and to grow upon one, till they become habits, and rule him, and hold him in chains. There is, for instance, the habit of procrastination—of putting off, instead of doing a thing at once. That grows terribly upon one, and becomes a hindrance of a very serious kind. There is the habit of drinking, which often has the foundations laid at a very early age, through the taste for it being then formed, perhaps unconsciously at the time. It may seem harmless at first, but soon grows to be a perfect demon, which there is no resisting, and which works dreadful havoc. Need I tell you what a "weight" this is, and what countless thousands it has wrecked, of those who made a fair start.

I am tempted here to say a word to the boys about the habit of smoking. Whatever it may be for men, it is bad for you. It is a great evil to many boys, and leads to evil. You would be far better without it—more independent, more your own masters. The fewer wants of this kind you

have, the better it is both for the body and the soul. It is apt to become a "weight."

There is the habit of idle and unprofitable reading, not to speak of what is positively bad. The reading of such books and papers as I refer to, is very much like drinking—it very soon and very easily becomes a bad habit. I am sûre it is a "weight" to many young people, keeping them away from Christ, or when they have become His, keeping them from following Him fully. It consumes precious time, it takes away relish for prayer and for the Bible and all solid reading, it excites without doing any good, it takes away the heart from God.

There is the habit of keeping company with unprofitable companions. Perhaps these are in the same school or class, or live in the same street with you, and you cannot help meeting and coming in contact with them. And you know how soon a bad companion begins to make his mark for evil, and how soon he makes others like himself. In using slang expressions or coarse and profane language, in mocking at God's Word or God's people, especially if there be a kind of cleverness about him, in taking liberties with the blessed Sabbath, and making it a day for lounging about or for mere amusement, such a one becomes infectious, and should be avoided like one who is in a fever. I might speak of many other things under this head. I have said enough, however, to indicate what I mean. All these are "weights," more or less heavy and hindersome. They shut many out from the strait gate, and keep back many who have entered in.

4. The last "weight" I shall mention is that of care. Perhaps this may seem not very much in your way, and more for your fathers and mothers. For what care can a boy or a girl have?—what anxiety or concern about worldly things, or fear about the future, as to how you are to get on, and the like? And yet I know even young hearts have their care—about lessons, and work otherwise, often not knowing what to do—with sorrows which are sometimes heavy and bitter enough. Some of you have difficulties at home. Some of you do not know how you are to get on as young Christians. Some of you are finishing your work at school, and are in doubt as to what you should do, about a profession or business or trade. Perhaps some young apprentice does not know how he is to provide his tools or outfit, or some girl has difficulty in getting a situation. And the care has become a "weight," and is in danger of becoming a hindrance.

I am sure there are none of you who do not know something about these "weights," and could tell how they hinder and keep you back in what is good. They will have much to do in making you the men and women that you shall be. And hence the great importance of looking at the matter, and that at once.

II. What is to be Done with the Weights?—Our text says they are to be "laid aside"—put off—cast away. "Let us lay aside every weight"—every such hindrance. It is the same word that we have in Acts vii. 58: "The witnesses laid down (literally put off) their clothes at a young man's feet whose name was Saul." Rom. xiii. 12: "Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness." Eph. iv. 22-25: "That ye put off the old man. Wherefore putting away lying." Col. iii. 8: "But now ye also put off all these, anger, wrath, blasphemy," etc. James i. 21: "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness," etc. 1 Peter ii. 1: "Wherefore laying aside all malice," etc. This is what you are to do with the "weights"—"put them off." Now the question is, How is this to be done? and to this question I have various answers to give.

1. By coming to Christ. This is the very first step to be taken. We

can only find pardon and cleansing in His precious blood. The first "weight" to be got quit of is that of unforgiven sin, and like "Christian's" burden, that can only be got rid of, at the Cross.

2. By drawing power from Christ. We cannot draw power out of Christ till we have come to Him. But when we have come, what boundless supplies we have in Him! Christ's strength is our strength. All that is in Him is available for us. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell—and ye are complete in Him." It is just like a man with all the resources of the bank at his call. He can have no fear of wanting anything. Christ has all that any of us can need, and He has it for us. Faith is just leaning upon Christ—looking to Christ—drawing upon Christ for everything.

3. By prayer. When we feel our own weakness, what can we do, but cry to the Strong for strength? The rule is, "Ask." Take the matter of care. You do not know what to do. "If any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, Who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." One of our greatest resources is this asking. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me."

4. By effort. We have the battle to fight, not in our own strength, but in the strength which Jesus gives. Take, for instance, the matter of temper. We have, prayerfully and believingly, to watch, to resist, and by the grace of God, to conquer. It is not a single act and then done with. It may be a life of struggle—of conflict—not of failure, but of victory. It may seem as if the same battle required always to be fought over again, and as if we were never making any headway. But it is not so. Every successful effort is a real gain, makes us stronger for the next, and is a step towards the final triumph.

"Yield not to temptation,
For yielding is sin;
Each victory will help you
Some other to win.
Fight manfully onward,
Dark passions subdue;
Look ever to Jesus—
He will carry you through."

Now, I wish to call special attention before closing, to this—that we are to lay aside every weight. There is to be no sparing. Everything that hinders must go. Just as you would do in running, so you should do in this other race.

And then it should be now—at once. Now is the best time—it may be the only time, for doing whatever is to be done. Begin to-day. You cannot take the first decided step too soon. Why should you not begin at this moment—in resolution—in prayer—in effort—to "lay aside every weight"?—*Rev. J. H. Wilson, D.D.*

Temptation

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation."—James i. 12.

To tempt a person is to try to induce him to do evil; it also means to test or prove him. Hence we may say that there are two kinds of temptation—one that comes from God, and one that comes from the devil. God frequently allows His people to be tried, in order to prove their faith and trust in Him. He "tempted" Abraham, when He commanded him to offer up his only son, not for the purpose of causing him to sin, as the devil

does, but to show how strong was his confidence in God, and as an example to others. Everyone born into the world is liable to be tempted. But God cannot tempt to sin—that temptation proceeds only from the devil, and many yield to it and fall. Christ knew that His disciples would have to endure it, and gave them this advice: "Pray that ye enter not into temptation." He knew how weak they were, and how easily they would fall away. One of them had declared only a little while before, "Though all should deny Thee, yet will not I"; yet that one who professed so much, immediately fell when tempted; and even at this time one of the band had yielded, and was advancing to betray his Master. The disciples did not think that they were so weak. They probably thought, as they had walked with Christ, held intercourse with Him, and viewed so many wondrous things done by Him, that they would be quite secure from yielding to temptation in whatever form it might appear. But how much they were mistaken! Jesus knew the particular dangers connected with their situation. In a short time He would be taken from them, and they would have to fight for themselves. Many kings and wicked men would rise up against them, and endeavour to cause them to deny Him. And Jesus knows now what are the temptations in which His people are most likely to fall, and still advises them, "Pray that ye enter not into temptation."

Let us think of some of the temptations to which people are liable.

I. Those of the World.—Riches and love of money often lead to sin. There was a man among the Israelites, in the time of Joshua, who was very fond of money; and to what did it lead? To stealing and taking away, for his own use, things that God had commanded to be destroyed. The consequences were fatal to himself, for he was at once stoned to death. It was love of money that induced Judas to betray Christ; and in his case also the consequences were fatal. The poor also have their temptations. Perhaps they become envious of the rich, and that leads to covetousness, and sometimes dishonesty. All have temptations peculiar to themselves. Children have theirs. It may be shown in an inclination to quarrel, or to be disobedient or untruthful. As they grow older they are tried in other ways. Old and young are all alike. If this is the case, it should make us earnest in finding out our own peculiar temptations, and watching against yielding to them.

II. The Devices of Satan.—Satan is animated by a spirit of hatred to God and everything that is good, and is always intent on the ruin of souls. He began by tempting Eve in the Garden of Eden; and from that time to the present his work has never ceased. He approaches the Christian in various ways—sometimes suddenly as the fierce lion, at other times slowly as the crafty serpent. He comes to the young, and tells them that they are in no danger of early death—that there will be plenty of time in the future for caring about their souls—that religion will take away all their pleasures, and render them sad and gloomy. He continues this advice till they get old, and then tells them that it is too late to seek for mercy and pardon. He often tempts the young Christian also by causing him to despair, and to fancy that he can never be a true follower of Jesus. Others he will tempt by causing them to appear very good in their own eyes. He tells them how good they are, that they do not need to become any better, and how much people are thinking and saying about them, till, by degrees, if they are not watchful, they become careless, or self-righteous, and go back to the world. He will create a liking for amusements, which, though not always sinful in themselves, will sometimes lead to sin, and to society, and places in which the child of God should never be seen. The devil not only works himself,

but he employs others to carry out his wicked designs. All wicked men are his agents, delighting to draw others with them. He did not come himself to Adam, but sent Eve, after he had caused her own fall. He will act through those who are dear to us. When troubles came upon Job, the devil instigated his wife to persuade him to "curse God." How often we find brothers and sisters leading each other into sin! And ungodly friendships generally have a similar result. In all the walks of life we are brought to a certain degree into connection with those who have no religion, and who will invite us to act in such a way as is opposed to the will of God, and must bring everlasting misery on the soul. And it is often very hard to withstand these. When the devil finds that one kind of temptation is resisted, he tries another, as he did with our Saviour.

How then are we to escape from temptation, or be able to endure it? Jesus tells us (1) By prayer. Our Lord teaches us in His own prayer to use the words, "Lead us not into temptation"; and He has said that prayer shall certainly be heard and answered if asked in His name. And, if it does not always prevent the temptation, it helps us to bear up under it. When Christian was passing through the valley, we are told that all his armour proved useless, until he betook himself to the weapon of All-prayer, and then he conquered. But Satan will frequently try us even when we are engaged in prayer. Is it not often the case that our thoughts wander while we are on our knees, or when we are in the house of God? Then must we pray all the more earnestly, calling on the Lord Jesus for help against the evil one. So shall we put him "behind us" and conquer.

2. By watching. The devil is so cunning in coming upon the Christian unawares, that, if he is not watching, he will speedily gain his own ends. Christ unites watching with prayer: "Watch and pray." And Jesus will help those who strive. It is a source of great encouragement to the Christian that he is not obliged to contend against temptation all in his own strength. God makes a way for His saints that they may be able to bear trial; and though it often causes them much sorrow, still they shall, in the end, escape. And, if God helps us, we ought also to help one another. Nor should we glory over a brother who falls, for we do not know how soon we may ourselves fall; or it may be easier for us to withstand them for him. And while we are fighting here often in much danger, let us remember that we can look forward to the time when we shall be tempted no more—to the abode where those who have endured faithfully to the end shall be blessed by receiving the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.

Self-control

"By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you," etc.—Judges vii. 7.

"What king, marching to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and take counsel whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?" *That*, certainly, seems the prudent course to take, as even the Lord Jesus, Who was not a man of war, but the Prince of Peace, could see. How foolish it was of Gideon, then, with only three hundred men to go up against more than a hundred times as many, against a host which had settled down on the vast plain of Jezreel like a cloud of locusts? And yet, *was* it foolish? "Even with many legions," says the great Roman historian (Tacitus), "it is always *the few* who win the battle"; and in a night attack, as every soldier knows, when an immense camp is to be surprised in the dark, the fewer men the better, so that they be sufficient to

turn the surprise into a rout. How could it be foolish when, besides conforming with military rule, it was the command of the only wise God? We might be sure that His command was wise, even though we could not see the wisdom of it. But, here, we can see the wisdom of it, and that in two ways —a military way, and a moral way.

First of all, a few men were better than many for a night surprise; only these few must be brave men, and men who could hold themselves well in hand; men, therefore, who could be well held in hand by their captain or leader. To sift the bravest and coolest spirits from his army, Gideon took two steps, both by Divine direction. The children of Midian, i.e. the Arabs of the Eastern desert, had swept across the Jordan into the fertile lands cultivated by the children of Israel. A hundred and thirty thousand of them were encamped on the plain of Jezreel. Gideon, so soon as he was sure that God had called him to the task of rolling back this great tide of invasion, sent out a summons to the neighbouring tribes. More than thirty thousand men responded to his summons, and gathered round him on Mount Gilboa, a range of hills which overlooked the great plain. Thirty thousand against a hundred and thirty thousand seemed none too many. But it *was* too many. Hence Gideon caused the proclamation to be made which by the law of Moses was always to be made when the armies of Israel came in sight of the foe (Deut. xx. 8): viz. that whosoever was faint-hearted or afraid was to return to his own house, lest his comrades' hearts should "melt" as well as his heart; i.e. lest his cowardice should infect his neighbours. That was a wise rule: for cowards in an army are worse than useless; they are dangerous; when they run, they leave gaps in the line through which the enemy may pass, even if they do not draw their braver comrades into running away with them. Now when this proclamation was made to Gideon's army, a shameful thing took place. Two-thirds of these volunteer soldiers dared to write themselves down poltroons, by deserting the standard of their country at its utmost need. Brave enough at a distance, when they looked down from the mountains, and saw the whole plain swarming with foes, the hearts of twenty thousand of them began to faint and melt within them, and they went off every one to his own place.

Thus Gideon was left, with only ten thousand, to encounter, not twenty, but more than a hundred and twenty thousand. Surely *these* were none too many! Yes, even these were too many. And so they were sifted again. At the foot of the mountain lay "the well of *Harod*," "the well of *Trembling*," as it was called, because the hearts of so many trembled that day; a well whose waters overflowed into a large pool or small lake. To this pool, towards the enemy therefore, Gideon led his ten thousand, and took note of how they carried themselves when they reached the cool living water. Most of the men, heated by the march, flung themselves on their knees and buried their faces in the stream, thinking only how they might most quickly quench their burning thirst. But among them there were three hundred brave and wary men who, even under the pangs of thirst, could not forget that they were in the presence of an enemy, and that it behoved them therefore to be on the alert. Instead of flinging themselves recklessly on the ground, they simply scooped up a little water in the hollow of their hands, and lapped or sipped it, even as a dog laps while he runs—on the watch for any ambush, prepared for any surprise. These, I dare say, were the veterans of the little army, men who had seen war before, and knew its perils, and felt how much even a moment's carelessness might cost them. And *these* were the men, marked out by their own wariness and self-control, by whom God meant to save Israel from its foes. All the rest may have been brave men; but they had

shown that they were unwary and self-indulgent, apt to think of only the present moment, men who would fly on the spoil when they should be driving on in pursuit. Hence they too were packed off, every man to his own place, and Gideon was left with his brave three hundred to encounter a hundred times three hundred four or five times told.

That looks like fearful odds. But the odds were not so fearful as they looked. For, after all, these men were wanted mainly to make a noise, to scare the Arabs into flight. And, meantime, Gideon had summoned the men of Ephraim to guard the fords of the Jordan and of all the streams which ran into the Jordan, so that when the Arabs fled, they might be slain as they crossed the river or its affluents.

The end justified the means, proved the wisdom of them. When the night was well advanced, Gideon armed his three hundred each with a trumpet, a torch, and an earthenware pot or jar in which to hide the flaming end of the torch till it was wanted. They crept stealthily down the hill, through the darkness, till they reached the edge of the vast sleeping camp. And then, when Gideon gave the signal, every man dashed his big pitcher or jar on the ground, blew his trumpet with all his force and waved his flaming torch, making the night hideous with the din and the glare. A panic fell on the host, and there ensued a "slaughter grim and great," so great, so grim, that "*the day of Midian*," became a proverb for slaughter, a proverb in use right down to the time of the prophet Isaiah (chap. ix. 4). Many of the Arabs turned their swords against their fellows; and many of those who fled were slain at the fords, or in the pursuit which gathered behind them: for, as the day dawned and advanced, the whole country-side turned out against them, and even their chiefs, the Raven and the Wolf, were taken and slain.

God's way was a wise way, then; and we can see it to have been a wise way even from a military point of view. It was also wise from a *moral* point of view. For if we ask, Why were thirty thousand too many, and why were even ten thousand too many, for the encounter with a hundred and thirty thousand? the sacred Chronicler replies: God knew that, if any natural explanation of this great deliverance had been possible, the men of Israel would have jumped at it; if they could anyhow have taken the credit of it to themselves, they would have taken it, and have refused to see the hand of the Lord stretched out to save them: "And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, *lest Israel vaunt themselves against Me, saying Mine own hand hath saved Me*." God wanted the men of Israel to know that it was *He* Who had saved them, and not they themselves; and therefore He saved them by the three hundred, and not by the thirty thousand or the ten.

This is what the Bible tells us about it. But what men often tell us is, that God is a jealous God Who wants all the glory of His acts, of His achievements, for Himself, and will not share that glory with another. Which is quite true, I suppose, if only we understand it in the right sense; though, in the sense in which it is too often understood, it is a base libel, a most pernicious lie.

My dear children, even though an Angel out of Heaven should tell you that God is jealously and selfishly set on His own glory, and on giving as little credit to men as He can, *do not believe him*. It is not true. It is shamefully untrue. It is a mere libel on our Father in Heaven. For the glory of God is His goodness; and He is never so happy as when He is doing us good. It was *because He wanted to do good* to the children of Israel, that He made is plain to them that it was He Who had saved them, and not they themselves.

Suppose they had defeated that great Arab host, which was like the locusts for multitude, purely by their own valour and skill, and had gone about puffed up and bragging of their own great deeds, would that have been good for them? Was it not infinitely more for their good to learn that God was with them and for them, that He loved them and would always save them from their foes if they took his advice; that He was their true Lord and King, and that they needed no other, because no other either could or would do half as much for them as He would do?

This was the lesson He tried to teach them when He saved them by the three hundred. And, again, the end justified the means. For Gideon did both learn and teach this lesson. Though it was so evidently God Who had saved the men of Israel, and had proved Himself to be their Lord by showing Himself to be their Minister, they were foolish enough to give most of the credit of their salvation to Gideon. But when they came to Gideon, and asked him to rule over them because *he* had delivered them out of the hand of Midian. Gideon laughed at them. He would not hear of their request. It was *God* Who had saved them, he said; and therefore it was God alone Who should rule over them: for would they not want saving again, and who could save them but God only?

This, then, is the story of Gideon; and this is the moral of the story—that God wants to rule over us only that He may save us; or, to put it in another way: God wants us to know that it is He Who *has* saved us, in order to assure us that He is always with us and for us, and that He will go on serving us and saving us to the end.

Now I could say a great deal to you on such a moral as this; and I almost wish that I had taken it for my theme. But I did not take it. It is not the story of Gideon on which I have promised to speak to you, but the story of the three hundred brave men who were content to sip the water of the mountain-well, while their comrades flung themselves on their faces and guzzled it till they were full. And, I dare say, some of you wonder what I am going to make of it, how I can bring it to bear on your daily life and duty. For you may say, "*We* shall never be in the position of the Three Hundred, never be brought to a stream of which, if we drink at all, we must drink it in the face of an enemy; *we* have not to choose between a wary sipping of water, and abandoning ourselves to a reckless and greedy enjoyment of it."

But that is a pure mistake on your part. For what I want to show you is that you *have* to make, and *do* make, *this very choice* almost every hour that you live; and that the whole worth of your life turns on the kind of choice you make.

I doubt, indeed, whether there is any one lesson you so much need to learn as that of self-rule, any habit which you so much need to form as that of self-control—the lesson taught, the habit illustrated, by the story of the Three Hundred. *They* felt, I suppose, that there were other and better things than the gratification of appetite, even when appetite was most craving and imperative. They felt that, while gratifying an appetite, they might lose life itself, or all that made life worth having. And, hence, they controlled their thirst, or their craving to indulge it, innocent as that craving was in itself, and lawful and right as it would have been to indulge it had the time been favourable to indulgence. And it is of the very first importance that you should share that feeling, and refuse to gratify cravings, appetites, desires, which may be quite natural and innocent in themselves, but which, nevertheless, it may be wrong of you to indulge, or wrong to indulge to the full.

The great difficulty is to make you sensible of your danger—to get you to believe that you must control the most natural and healthy cravings *on peril*

of your life. You are like the comrades of the brave Three Hundred. You see no ambush, you suspect no danger, and cannot understand why, when you are so thirsty, you should not fling yourselves on your faces and drink of the cool water as hard as you like. You can easily understand, indeed, that the poor neglected children you meet in the streets, or see in the workhouse, may eat or drink too much when they get a chance, or be too eager for gain if they see a chance of getting gain, or rush at any pleasure which comes in their way. But you, who have been brought up in pious, comfortable homes, trained in good habits, provided with all you need—what danger can there be for you?

Alas, there is much danger, constant danger, terrible danger, even for you. And I want to convince you of it; for how can I expect that you will be on your guard against it unless you believe that it exists?

Well, now, listen. I have known many young people as happily placed, as well bred and trained as you, as full of promise and hope, who, simply because they had not learned to control their appetites and cravings, have ruined themselves in health and reputation, in body and soul. I could tell you by the hour of ministers' sons and daughters, and deacons' sons and daughters, who have brought themselves to an early grave, or are dying in workhouses, or are shut up in asylums, for no other reason than this—that they indulged their craving appetites till they could no longer control them. Why, at this very moment, I can sorrowfully recall to mind at least a dozen men and women, some of them not much older than the eldest of you, who have thus become the shame and the misery of parents who were once as proud and fond of them as your fathers and mothers are of you. And I will venture to say that there is hardly a grown-up person in this place to-night who could not tell you of children whom they once loved and admired who have lost themselves on this perilous road.

How, then, can those who love *you* but have their fears for you, their anxieties about you? Your danger is the greater precisely because you do not suspect it. *We* did not suspect it when we were young any more than you do. But we have no doubt of it now. And many a man of my own age as he looks back is disposed to say that, either for want of wise teaching or through lack of self-control, most men spend the first half of their lives in forming habits which they have to spend the latter half of their lives in breaking; and that is a doleful waste of time and force from which we would fain save you, if we can.

What I want you to see is, that self-control is required at every moment along the whole range of your habits, and through the whole course of your life. From our present point of view, it may be just as wrong to drink too much water as to drink too much wine; just as wrong to eat too much wholesome food as to eat food which is unwholesome; just as wrong to give too much time to play, and to be too fond of it, as not to play at all; just as wrong to be too eager to make money, and to get on in the world, as to be too lazy to do any work well. Of course, it is quite right to drink when you are thirsty, and to eat when you are hungry, and to play when your work is done, and to be diligent in business when you have business to do. It is only the *too much* against which you need to be on your guard. It is only against being too hotly set on any object that we warn you. It is only the habit of controlling cravings and desires which are likely to run away with you that we invite and beseech you to form, which we say you *must* form if you would not injure your health, your reputation, your usefulness.

Our counsel to you is: Hold yourselves well in hand. Do not suffer any appetite of the body, or any ambition of the mind, to master you. Be masters of yourselves, of all your appetites and of all your desires. Sip the water, or

the wine, of life, like the Three Hundred. Lap at it as you go on your way, and keep a good look-out for the enemies that may lurk in it or around it. But do not, like their rejected comrades, fling yourselves on your knees to it, and drink as if your only business in the world was to get your fill of pleasure, or of gain, and to gratify your appetites as they rise within you.

And if you wish to know how you are to set about acting on this advice, I must point you to the Three Hundred once more. They felt that life was more than meat; that the freedom and honour of their country was more than the slaking of their thirst, and must be put and kept before it. Learn from them, then, to keep a high and noble aim steadfastly before you, an aim which must be pursued, if need be, at the cost of appetite and desire: and let that aim be the highest of all, viz. the love and service of God. Do what you honestly believe He would have you do. Be sure that He is always with you, that He loves you, that He is trying to save you from all inordinate and evil desires, to deliver you from the bonds of every evil habit, to give you the command of all your faculties and powers, to help you to put the best things first, and to keep your highest aims before all lower and inferior aims.

Would you like to have a pattern, an example, of what you ought to be and do in order to attain this habit of self-control? You may find it in Jesus Christ our Lord—find it most of all in His meekness and gentleness. For it is, by "the meekness and gentleness of Christ," that St Paul beseeches us to subdue all fleshly cravings, and to cast down all the "imaginations" which exalt themselves against God and against our true life in Him.

Now to be meek is to be able to bear pain and wrong without murmuring. And to be gentle is to be able to act without violence, without vehemence, without any undue or excessive yielding to our natural passions. In fine, meekness and gentleness are but the passive and active sides of that very self-restraint, or self-control, to which I have been urging you. Look to Christ, then. Remember Him. Imitate Him. Try to be meek when you are provoked to anger, or when you are called to suffer pain and loss because you *will* do that which is right. Try to be gentle in your daily conduct and pursuits, to gratify your cravings and follow your aims with temperance, sobriety, and a thoughtful consideration for the wishes and aims of those about you which will preserve you from pushing, from violence, from greediness and selfishness. For if you take the meekness and gentleness of Christ for your ideal, and strive toward it, and pray for grace to live by it, you will acquire the self-control which will be your best safeguard amid all the temptations to which you are exposed; since He Who gave you Christ will also give you the virtues of Christ, the mind and heart which were in Him.

God grant, my dear children, that you all may both seek and find that self-mastery which He displayed in all He did; that so you may be saved from the shipwreck which has overtaken so many of our neighbours and friends, whose violent delights had violent ends, and be enrolled among those by whom God will yet save Israel.—*Rev. Samuel Cox, D.D.*

Learn to say "No"

"*My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.*"—*Prov. i.* 10.

Did you ever stand by the side of a river, and watch a man fishing for trout? I have, once or twice; and when I did—the man was fishing with flies—I noticed how very careful he was to suit his bait to the appetite of the creatures he wanted to catch. Obviously he had studied the nature of the trout. He knew what flies they liked, and what flies they disliked. He knew that what would be palatable to them in one month, would not be palatable in another;

that what they would "rise at" in a morning, they would perhaps turn away from in the evening of the same day. And so he had had a great many flies made out of feathers, or wool, or hair, or something of the kind, to look like real flies; and one of these he threw lightly upon the surface of the water; and every now and then a fish swallowed the bait down, and was caught by the hook that was concealed within it, and dragged to land.

You see that the fisherman's plan was to *entice* the fish. He persuaded the poor ignorant creature that the bait which he offered was something very pleasant, and worth having; and the result was, that he became the fish's master, and was able to do what he pleased with him. If the fish had been wise enough not to have "consented," no harm would have happened. The fisherman could not have hurt him. But the "enticement" was too strong, and he did consent; and by consenting, he lost his life.

Perhaps what I have said about the fisherman and the fish will enable you to understand better the meaning of our text. When any person endeavours to persuade another to do wrong, he does not merely ask him to consent, but he "entices" him: that is to say, he promises him some advantage, which is to arise from his consenting. Now suppose that you are tempted in this way, suppose that you are enticed, what are you to do? Solomon tells you. You are to refuse, distinctly, plainly, positively, and at once. You are to say "No." "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not."

"*Yes, but,*" says someone, "*how am I to know that I am being enticed, when I am asked to take a certain step? Perhaps it may be right, perhaps it may be wrong, to take the step. But how am I, young and inexperienced as I am, to be sure which it is?*" I will try to answer the question.

In the first place, then, you should notice that Solomon is speaking about "sinners," and warning you against them. Now that word "sinner," as it is used in the Bible, is a large and broad word, and applies to very many more persons than is generally supposed. You are to understand by it, not merely wicked men and women, but also all people who have no love for God, and no will or desire to obey His laws. These are sinners, according to the Bible, whatever they may think of themselves, and whatever the world at large may think of them; and the influence which they exert is not for good, but for evil. The first of these two classes—the openly and shamelessly wicked—you are not at all likely to meet with whilst you are children; but the careless, the indifferent, the irreligious, the people who do not love or serve Jesus Christ, you may encounter anywhere, and at any time. Perhaps you have some of them amongst your own schoolfellows and companions. At all events, there may be some young persons you know who laugh at religion secretly, who make fun of the Bible, who never pray, who speak contemptuously of their parents' anxiety for them, to whom everything good is a weariness, and who are always longing to get away from it, that they may be following their own devices. I do not, of course, want you to set yourselves up to be judges of other people, far less to think yourselves better than other people; but there are cases in which you cannot help forming an opinion. You cannot help feeling that the heart and the life of a certain person are not in harmony with God. Something tells you that that person does not love God. There are indications about him which convince you, though you do not wish to be uncharitable, that he is not on the side of the Lord Jesus Christ, but rather against Him. Why, Scripture says, "Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right." It is possible for you, then, young as you are, to judge of a companion's character so far as to find out if he be really irreligious; and if you have reason to think him so, you are bound to be very cautious in taking his advice, especially if you feel doubtful

yourself about the right and the wrong of the matter. He may not be "enticing" you; but then again he may be; and you must be upon your guard.

In the next place, you have something within you which is called "conscience"; and as you are a Christian child, born and living in a Christian country, and as you read and hear the Bible continually, that conscience must be, to a great extent, instructed and enlightened. Now, your conscience will help you to ascertain whether you are being enticed to do wrong or not. An Eastern story tells us that when a young Prince was going out into the world, his tutor gave him a wonderful ring to put on his finger. The ring—said the tutor—would point out the presence of secret danger, by nipping and pinching him sharply; but if he did not attend to its warnings, it would gradually lose its virtue, and become useless. If he failed to heed it once, the next time when danger came it would pinch, but less sharply than before: its warning would not be so distinct. If the Prince neglected *this* warning, he would scarcely notice, on the next occasion, the gentle squeeze which the ring would give; and, by and by, if he continued careless, the ring would cease to exert any pressure at all, and the young man would have to pass on through his perilous journey without the monitions of the faithful friend who would have guided him right. I think this fable (for of course it is a fable) must be intended to represent the action of Conscience. The first time that we do wrong, we feel a painful sense of distress and shame. It is like the ring pinching the young Prince's finger. But if we do not attend to the pinching, but persist in our wrongdoing, the next time that conscience is called upon to act, it acts more feebly, and causes less discomfort than before: and presently it becomes almost quiet, and ceases to trouble us at all. However, when this happens, it is with older people than you are. With you who are young, conscience has not yet gone to sleep. I trust it never will. And conscience will almost invariably tell you, when a course of action is proposed, if it is wrong for you to enter upon it.

I am supposing, you see, that you are not able to consult your parents, or anyone older and more experienced than yourself. You are asked to do a certain thing: and you put the question to yourself, "Am I being 'enticed,' or am I not?" Well: *what sort of person is it that asks you?* Is it one who serves God? Is it one who loves the Lord Jesus Christ? Is it one who is striving to live a good and holy life? If it is not, if it is a careless, thoughtless, irreligious person—you must be on your guard, and be very suspicious. And then what does conscience say? If conscience says, "It is not right"; or even if conscience says, "it is doubtful," the matter is settled for you: you must by no means "consent." You must plainly and positively say "No."

But, after all, I think that the greatest danger to us arises rather from within than from without. Careless, irreligious, companions are bad enough; and it is sometimes very difficult to resist their solicitations. But far more perilous is that *Self* which every one of us carries in his own breast; and far more difficult is it to say "No" to him than to anyone else. And why it should be so, you can easily understand. Self is closer to us than anybody else, comprehends us better, sees more of the ins and outs of our hearts, is able to coax us in the most effectual way; and therefore, when Self insists upon being gratified, it is exceedingly difficult for us to refuse compliance with the demand. Now it not infrequently happens that the wishes of Self are directly opposed to the wishes of the Lord Jesus Christ. For instance, Self sometimes says, "Keep," when the Lord Jesus says, "Give up"; Self says, "Be angry," when the Lord Jesus says, "Be patient"; Self says, "Take your ease," when the Lord Jesus says, "Be diligent and earnest"; Self says, "Leave off," when the Lord Jesus says, "Persevere." In other words, Self promises you some

advantage or gratification—ease, revenge, pleasure, or something of the kind, if only you will consent to its demands. But in such cases you *must not consent*: you must contradict and oppose Self in order that you may yield obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is this denial of self, I think, which our Lord alluded to when He spoke, as He so often did, about "taking up the cross" to follow Him. In olden times the disciples of Jesus had to submit to severe persecutions. Frequently their property was taken from them, and they were cast out of house and home. Men even thought that they did God service by putting them to death. You and I, however, thank God—have little fear of being called upon to suffer such persecutions for Christ's sake. We sit quietly at home; and though we may sometimes be laughed at for our religion, no one, nowadays, in our country at least, can do much more than laugh. But have we, therefore, no cross to take up? Oh, yes, we have! Daily, hourly, we are called upon to contradict our own inclinations, to do something which we should like to leave undone, or to leave undone something which we should like to do. Self often goes one way, and Christ goes another; and we have to forsake self to follow Christ. In other words, it is frequently our duty, as Christians, to say "No" to the solicitations or enticements of evil, whether they assail us from within or without.

"*But*," you say, "*it is very hard to do this.*" Not so very hard, I reply, for those who love Christ. Love makes a great difference in the matter. You will willingly put yourself out of the way, and willingly submit to much inconvenience, for a person you love. You do not think the trouble you take for him very great trouble; you do not find the burden you carry for him so very heavy. And so, if you have really given your heart to Christ, neither will His commandments be "grievous," nor self-denial for His sake very irksome. At the same time I grant that there is a difficulty. I know that to be always on our guard—always checking oneself—always controlling oneself—always refusing to please self, when we cannot at the same time please Christ, is not an easy thing. None of us find it so. I only say that the difficulty is not too great, if you have the love of the Saviour in your heart, and are willing to give yourself up to the monition and guidance of God's Holy Spirit.

Remember, too, dear children, that we do not represent self-denial as constituting the whole of religion. Self-denial is indeed necessary; but it is only necessary, as the fence or the hedge is necessary to the fruit-garden. The thorny, prickly hedge keeps out intruders and thieves; but the rich, ripe fruit hangs within, clustering on the bough. And self-denial is only intended to protect the fruits of the Spirit: the love, and joy, and peace, and goodness, and gentleness, and meekness which grow upon the tree of the Christian character. And besides, I would have you remember, as to this Christian character, that there is a force and a power and a manliness about it. The Bible speaks of Christians as being "strong in the Lord." It speaks, too, of our "overcoming the world"; of our being "Kings unto God." And what do these expressions mean, if not that when temptation assails us, when enticements come, true Christians are those who stand firm, and will not yield an inch of ground to the enemy? But how are we to do this, if we have not learnt to say "No"? Of course we cannot do it; and if we are weak, and yield, we shall become wicked before long; for Weakness lives next door to Wickedness, and they soon become companions. And the only way I know of to escape such a fate is to resolve, by God's help, not to "consent" when we are "enticed" to do that which we feel or suspect to be wrong. But bear in mind this—that the refusal must be distinct, positive, immediate. We must say *at once*, "I will not." If we hesitate and parley with the tempter,

we shall certainly be drawn into sin. "Resist the devil," says Scripture, "and he will flee from you."

Yes: it may be difficult at first to resist enticement; but it will be easier the next time. And, before long, practice will have imparted to your self-denial something of the facility and pleasure of a habit. And then remember that you will always have the approval of your conscience and the smile of your God to help you on.

You are learning many lessons, dear children, in order that you may be fitted for your future life: lessons in foreign languages, in Music, in Arithmetic, in History, and in other things; and all of them are important. But more important still is it that you should learn the lesson of saying "No"; that you should acquire the art of not consenting when you are enticed, by sinners or by self, to do that which is displeasing to the Lord Jesus Christ.

—*Rev. Gordon Calthrop.*

Bits and Bridles

"*Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose trappings must be bit and bridle to hold them in, else they will not come near unto thee.*"—*Ps. xxxii.* 9.

How can a child be like a horse or a mule? There is all the difference in the world between children and horses. When you draw a boy on your slate, and then draw a horse, the boy perhaps is not very like any boy you ever saw, or indeed that anybody else ever saw; nor is the horse like any horse that ever drew a carriage, or carried a rider. Still, even on paper, there is all the difference in the world between a horse and a boy. No one draws quite so badly that he has to write "Boy" under one figure and "Horse" under the other, for fear people should mistake one for the other.

And yet, though so unlike each other in most things, this text hints that a child can be like a horse; in fact, that children and grown-up people are in great *danger* of being like horses and mules. It tells us too in what way. It says that horses have no understanding, and must be held in with bit and bridle, if you want to stop or turn them. They have to be *forced* to do things. Their rider has to *make* them go, *make* them stop, and *make* them turn round. Some of them can, no doubt, be made to understand and obey words and signs. Yet, however good and gentle a horse is, you never see men riding or driving without bridles, because there is not understanding enough in the horse to obey mere words. His master has very often to *make* him do things.

Well, are not men often like their horses in this? Have *they* not to be held in with bit and bridle? But you will say, We never saw a man with a bit in his mouth. Perhaps not—but did you never see a policeman walking up and down a street? Now, what do the policemen in our streets mean? They mean that there are a great many men, and women too, in this country who will not leave people or things alone—who will not be honest, or quiet, or sober, unless they are *forced*. They are like the horse and the mule. They have to be *held in* by bit and bridle.

Did you ever see a gaol? A great, big, dark house, with a high wall going all round it, with heavy chains hanging over its great thick door? Now, what does the gaol mean? What do those chains mean? They mean that here in England to-day there are people so dangerous to other people that they have to be shut up in gaols, and held fast by chains to keep them from doing harm.

Did you ever see a soldier? O yes, scores of soldiers! You like to see them, don't you? Yet a soldier, for all his fine uniform, is a sad sight. For what do soldiers mean? That there are still many people in the world—

outside our land, and inside too—who will not behave themselves peacefully and honestly unless they are *made* to do so by sheer force.

So, although you never see men and women going about with *horses'* bridles over their head or *horses'* bits in their mouths, there are a great many who have to be held in and kept quiet with bridles that are very much stronger and more shameful.

And not only grown-up people; children at home and in school very often —much, much too often—are like little horses and mules, who won't do right, or go right, unless they are *made to.*

Did you ever see a cane in your school?

Do you ever hear of "lines" and "impositions," and of being "kept in"?

Yes, I am sure you have. Well, what are these things? They are the bits and bridles with which boys and girls have to be driven and guided when they behave as horses do.

How often does a mother or a nurse have to say sadly, "These children won't do what they are told unless I *threaten* them!" And that means that the children, like mules, only move at the sound of the whip, and only stop at the pull of the bridle.

But now perhaps some boy or girl will say, "Well, after all, a horse that obeys the bridle is not a bad horse, and a child that does what he is told, although he has to be told several times, is not a *very* bad child.

No, he *is* not very bad—yet—but he will soon be, if he does not alter.

Bits and bridles can keep horses in the right way; but men and women, boys and girls, cannot be made good, or kept good, against their own wishes.

A policeman can, perhaps, stop a thief from stealing; but all the policemen in the world cannot stop him from *wanting* to steal, and so long as a man *wants* to steal he is a bad man—a thief in his heart, whether his hands take things or not.

Gaols and gaolers can keep people from *doing* wrong, but not from *being* wrong. The cane in school may keep you from hitting another boy, but it can't make you leave off hating him in your heart.

Men are not good unless their hearts are good; that is, unless they do good because they love goodness, and leave off doing bad things because they hate sin with all their might.

A man who does not do bad deeds only because he is afraid of being punished is really a bad man, and most likely some day he will be so tempted as to forget his fear and do the bad deeds.

And a child who in school only obeys the cane, and at home does things in a sulky, pouting way, may not *yet* be a very bad child, but he is most certainly on the way to become a really wicked man. Therefore the text says, "Be *ye* not as the horse or the mule."

How, then, should we be guided? By something that God has put into each one of us for that purpose. The text calls it "understanding." It is a rather long word, but I think you all know what it means. It is the real difference between men and animals.

No man would say to the best horse in the world, "Now, I want you to take me to the bookseller's, then to the grocer's and the chemist's, and then to the railway station"; because no horse could *understand*—could know what it all meant. He could never go to all these places of himself. He has to be guided by bit and bridle.

But a child *understands*: he knows what words mean; he knows, too, right from wrong, and he knows God's will about them.

You know love from hate, truth from falsehood, good from bad, and you know perfectly well and at once, each time these things come before you, which

you ought to choose. You know quite well that you ought to do right always; and the more you do what you ought, the more easily and plainly will you see what is right in every case.

Right is God's will. There was once a great temple with a wonderful image in it. And the wonderful thing about the image was this, that to whatever part of the temple men went, the eyes of the image seemed to be looking at them and watching them. Of course the idol could not see anything *really*. But in the verse before the text, God says, "I will counsel thee with Mine eye upon thee." God really sees us. From every commandment in the Bible, from the life of Jesus Christ, from every right and good thing that comes in our way, God's eye looks out upon us and counsels us, tells us what to do and how to do it.

And God's eye upon us should be enough for us. Our knowledge of right and wrong should be enough. There should be no need of bit and bridle of any sort for us. We should be not horses that obey the bridle, but children that obey from the heart. Pray God, then, to keep you from being like the horse or the mule, and to help you always to be imitators of God as beloved children, walking in love, as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for you.—*Rev. J. M. Gibbon.*

The Christian's Race

"*Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.*"—*Heb. xii.* 1, 2.

The Christian's life is compared in Scripture to various kinds of motion—to a journey, a voyage, a march, a wrestling-match, a contest with the cæstus. It is here compared to a race. Before we go further, let us try to ascertain how far the comparison is borne out. And here it may be observed, that it is needless to look in St Paul's similes for more than a general resemblance. Some writers take great pains in the choice of illustrations, that they may so represent in a variety of ways the object illustrated, as to draw forth new wonder, and convey new instruction at every point and turning: but it was not so with St Paul. The generality of his allusions convey a distinct idea to the mind, but not a succession of ideas; they lighten up the discourse or argument; there is a natural appropriateness in them, but not that studied, close-fitting resemblance which is aimed at by writers who think more of style than matter. At the same time rhetoricians and essayists might learn many a noble lesson from the writings of the great Apostle to the Gentiles, and furnish themselves with many a powerful shaft from his well-stored quiver.

I. How does a Christian's life resemble a race? It is of a certain length—sometimes cut short by the hand of disease or accident, but seldom extending beyond threescore years and ten, or fourscore. It is marked out or appointed for us from first to last. It requires a continued effort, and constant sacrifices to secure our arriving at the end. The races in ancient times were run, as most of you know, on a course called a stadium. The length was about one-eighth of a mile. The form resembled an elongated horse-shoe. The race, therefore, was not in a continuous line, but included a going and returning, in all a quarter of a mile. This finds its parallel in human life. The prime of life has often been compared to the turning post, round which the feet of the racers swiftly ran, and from which they sped

their way home. All that precedes it is likened to the first part of the course; all that comes after to the running in.

That St Paul, when writing to Greeks, should use language taken from the games with which they were so familiar, cannot be regarded as singular; but that the same illustrations should be used in an Epistle to Hebrews, is somewhat remarkable. It seems to show that not only the Hellenistic language, which was a dialect of Greek, was spoken very widely, but that Hellenic, that is, Greek ideas had become diffused over large tracts of country where the government was Roman, and the population Hebrew.

Let us next consider the inducement which St Paul holds out to the Christian, to run with patience the race that is set before him.

II. "Seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses." This refers to the patriarchs and prophets, and holy men and women who, through faith in the coming Messiah, accomplished great deeds under the old covenant. The word which is rendered in our version, "witnesses," would be better translated "spectators." The expression is taken from the appearance of the Grecian games. The whole of Greece assembled on these festal occasions, eager to see the prizes conferred for excellence in running, leaping, wrestling, boxing, and throwing the discus—also for chariot-races. St Paul may have witnessed such a gathering from the heights of Corinth. He would see the eager spectators gathered round the contending champions, cheering them in their course, urging them to redoubled efforts, and straining their eyes no less eagerly as they watched the runners, than the runners themselves strained every limb in the contest. He may have watched old men, who in days of yore had won prizes by their swiftness, gazing with pride on their sons or grandsons now rivalling the feats of their youth; and others, who in the earlier part of the day had run and had been crowned, he may have seen looking with intense interest on the race in which their companions were striving for mastery. Let no one think the simile is so far below the reality that it is unworthy of being employed. St Paul knew that whatever of religious feeling was left among the Greeks was expended on occasions such as these. To take part in them they would relinquish the most serious pursuits of a public or private nature; and, in the light-hearted exultation which each freeborn Greek felt at a national festival, was the germ of a feeling which, with purer light and knowledge, might ripen into the spirit of joy and thankfulness which animates the Christian who is conscious of the value in the eyes of God of his individual soul, and of the freedom from sin which is the heritage of those who are born anew in Christ of the Holy Ghost.

Well may they be called a *cloud* of witnesses, or spectators. The term cloud signifies the gathering together of watery vapours, less transparent than air, yet not more solid. We may imagine forms of the great believers of olden time, looming mysteriously through the atmosphere of ages, desiring to look on the believers of to-day: a mighty company; some more, some less distant. Do they know what our condition is? Who can tell? But if so, they know that we are in possession of privileges for which they longed, and longed in vain; and they wait to see what use we make of them. Perhaps they may see us exhibiting signs of faintness, or turning aside from the course. If so, how they will wonder at us, not wtihout regret and compassion, that they who enjoy such gifts, are so unproductive of good fruit; that they who have such a prize held out to them, exert themselves so feebly to obtain it! Spectators as they are now, they will be witnesses against us hereafter, if we, to whom the Lord Jesus Christ has been manifestly revealed—who have been made sharers in His victory over death and

sin—run our race with less vigour than they theirs. They will tell how they, in striving for the mastery, were temperate in all things. Nay, even the athlete in the Greek stadium will be a witness against us. He, striving for a corruptible prize, a chaplet of parsley, or olive, or ivy, kept his body under—endured heat and cold, weariness and pain, practised temperance, and submitted himself to his trainer, that he might have the freest use of the powers God had given him, and gain renown among his assembled countrymen.

III. Having considered the motive which the Christian has to run the race that is set before him, the Apostle sets forth the manner in which the race is to be run.

1. As to the preparation requisite, "Let us lay aside every weight." Runners in the Greek national contests stripped themselves of all their clothing that they might be lighter and freer. In like manner the human soul is exhorted to divest, i.e. to strip itself of everything which clogs its Heavenward aspirations, that it may rise without let or hindrance above the cares of earth, and soar upwards to the Source of all Good. There may be many indulgences which are, in themselves, perfectly harmless, yet which drag down the spirit to earth, and check the freedom of its flight. Riches are a hindrance to the active exertion of the higher faculties, not because there is anything in wealth which debases its possessor, but because wealth offers the means of procuring earthly comforts with such ease, that the mind is tempted to rest secure in their possession, and to suppose that the acquisition of spiritual blessings will be equally easy. Hence, Jesus said, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God." The Venetian conspirator who slipped from the plank which led to his ship, and was borne down by the weight of his armour; the pirate who tries to escape from a sinking vessel with a great bag of gold; the sepoy mutineer who in vain endeavoured to outstrip his pursuers, laden as he was with the plunder of our treasuries—all these illustrate the position of the irresolute Christian who tries to run with his weight, and cannot make up his mind to the sacrifice required in the first instance.

2. He is also called upon to lay aside "the sin that doth so easily beset him." The expression in the original is somewhat difficult. It only occurs in this passage, and according to Chrysostom means, "the sin which easily deceives us." According to some, it refers to the toils or nets set round a wood to inclose the wild animals within. However this may be, we all are familiar with the expression, "besetting sin." Would that our knowledge stopped short of the reality! But, alas! we have all of us, at least, some one sin to which we are especially prone—either a sin of temper, or a sin of indolence, or pride, or levity, or censoriousness, or some other of the many defects which mar the beauty of the Christian character. This we are called upon to lay aside. How many a Christian's course is impeded by some one sin, which, if not allowed, is at times, and under certain circumstances, his master. In some cases the influence of a besetting sin is not acknowledged. The whole character has become warped from its integrity, in order to screen a gross defect in one particular. These are the least hopeful cases, for in them conscience appears blunted, and no longer exercising its rightful supremacy over the faculties of the mind. But, generally speaking, Christians, if at all in earnest, are aware of their besetting sin. They cannot fail to discern it, if they habitually bring their conduct to the test of God's Word. That standard is infallible, and will surely detect any lurking sin, and point out the slightest deviation from the right path. May God give us grace to apply it faithfully, and diligently to conform ourselves to the

rule of holy living which is laid down in the Bible for the true followers of Jesus.

3. The Apostle exhorts us to "run with patience the race that is set before us." There are many qualities required in a successful candidate for the prize in the Christian's race. Of all these endurance is selected. It might be thought that speed was a necessary gift. In the Greek contests it undoubtedly was; and in the Christian's race sluggishness is often a precursor of a total stop. But the main requisite is endurance. The contest is prolonged during the whole period of the Christian's life, and it is not enough to start at full speed, urged by winged hopes, to make exertions which are too exhausting to be kept up. Perseverance is also needed. The want of this is the cause of many failures and disappointments. Many, who make a fair start, finding the course long, and the protracted effort wearisome, turn aside, and either fall off altogether, or else return by a different path to that which is marked out for them by Him Who presides over the race. In old times the trainer of the young athletes and runners exercised an important office. It was his business to attend to their bodily condition, and take care also that they led regular lives. The teachers and instructors of youth, especially those who are the appointed ministers of Christ's Word and sacraments, are placed in a corresponding position towards those who are inspired with a godly desire to run the Christian race. It is their duty to point out the dangers to which youth is especially liable; it belongs to them to aid, by their knowledge, the inexperience of younger believers; it is theirs, too, to comfort and cheer those whose courage fails, or whose strength is exhausted before the wished-for goal is reached. There is one great difference between the ordinary runner and the Christian. Whereas bodily powers, after a certain period of exertion, begin to flag, the Christian receives fresh supplies of spiritual strength and a continual increase of energy until the end. Not like a meteor, which flashes across the sky, and then disappears amid the gloom of night, he resembles a pure and lucent light, which burns more and more brightly, shining with an ever-increasing splendour unto the perfect day. May our light so shine, dear brethren, and may our feet be so strengthened to run the race that is set before us, that we may neither be faint nor weary, but "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might."

IV. As an encouragement to our efforts, and as a means of directing our steps, the Apostle exhorts us to "look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith."

These words connect the text with the preceding chapter, in which are enumerated the worthies of the Old Testament who, "through faith, obtained a good report." The source of their strength, the motive principle of action with them, was faith in the coming Messiah; just as the source of all our strength, the main inducement to run with patience the race that is set before us, is faith in Jesus, as He is revealed to us in the New Testament.

Jesus is called the Author and Finisher of our faith. In Him our faith must take its earliest rise, and in Him attain to its fullest accomplishment. The religion of Christ is sometimes called "our faith." Of this Jesus is the Founder, as He is the Perfecter. The first dawn of religious life within the soul is His work. The glory of its final consummation—the crown of martyrdom, or the peaceful end of one who can say, "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith," are alike due to Him. Faith in Christ crucified must be at the root of all our hopes of pardon and forgiveness; faith in Christ triumphant over death, and ascended up into Heaven, must

be the foundation of our hopes of victory over sin, as well as of everlasting happiness in the world to come.

Hence the Christian is exhorted to "look unto Jesus" in order that he may run with patience the race set before him. As the eyes of the young aspirant for the honours of the stadium were directed towards the awarder of the prize, so the glance of the runner in the Heavenly race is to be fixed on Jesus, Whom the eye of faith discerns holding in His hand the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, shall give to all that desire to be filled with His presence, and look forward with joy to His appearing.

The Christian's race is different from those of which St Paul says that in them all run, "but one receiveth the prize." The number of prizes is co-extensive with the number of the elect, and we know from the Book of Revelation that they shall not be few, but a great multitude, whose voice shall sound "as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings" (Rev. xix. 6). Yet, though the crowns of immortality are as numerous as the ranks of the faithful, the soldiers of Christ are not to relax their discipline, nor abandon their efforts. That laborious training, and that system of self-denial which St Paul refers to as the rule of life of every man that strove for the mastery in the Olympian and Isthmian games, are to be undergone by the Christian—not for a brief portion of his life, but from first to last. The words, "So run that ye may obtain," refer as much to the closing period of the Christian's race as to its commencement. St Paul himself acquaints us with his practice, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." And he shows us, by the example of the Galatians, the great danger of sacrificing the advantages of a good start by permitting alien influences to hinder them, "that they should not obey the truth." If it can be said of you, dear brethren, "ye *did* run well," O let it not be said that any person or any thing hinders you now. As the trainers rejoiced in the swiftness and endurance of their pupils in the gymnastic games, so must your teachers and ministers rejoice to see you actually running well; fulfilling, and more than fulfilling, whatever hopes they have conceived of you. They must rejoice and be glad, and Angels must be sharers in their joy, and the spirits of just men made perfect—the cloud of witnesses of the olden time, and all who have since died in the faith, including your dearest friends and earthly relatives now exalted to the regions of immortal bliss—all these must rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory at the sight of myriads of redeemed souls pressing eagerly towards the mark "for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

In order to do this, we must "look unto Jesus." He must be the object, not of our casual and hasty glances, but of our fixed, enduring gaze. We must, as the original bids us, look off from everything else, and look unto Him alone. Thus only can we "forget the things which are behind, and reach forth unto those things which are before"; by this means, and this alone, can we "turn from dead works to serve the living and true God."

—*Rev. G. Butler, M.A.*

Critical Notes on the Epistle

Know ye Not.—By the phrase "Know ye not," Paul intimates that those games to which he alludes were well known to them, and that they must be familiar with their design, and with the manner in which they were conducted. With these games in their Grecian form the Corinthians and

St Paul at Corinth would be familiar. As he travelled from Athens to Corinth he passed the stadium, or race-course, of the celebrated Isthmian games, so called from the Corinthian isthmus. In the nature of those games he saw the elements of a vivid physical imagery (especially in the race) for the illustration of the Christian life. Almost every point of the gymnastic contest he has in some part of his writings brought into use. Gal. ii. 2; v. 7; Phil. ii. 16; iii. 14; 1 Tim. 6. 12; 2 Tim. ii. 5; Heb. xii. 1, 4, 12. In the present passage we have the race, the racer, the prize, the temperance, the garland, the herald, the rejected combatant. At ver. 26, by a momentary change, the boxing-match is the source of allusion. *In a race*—In the stadium. The stadium, or running ground, or place in which the boxers contended, and where races were run. At Olympia the stadium was a causeway 604 feet in length, and of proportionable width. Herod., lib. ii, c. 149. It was surrounded by a terrace, and by the seats of the judges of the games. At one end was fixed the boundary or goal to which they ran. *One receiveth the prize*—With the Greeks these games, traceable to a heroic age of gods and demigods, were a part of their religion. They were practised to bring the human form to that same idealised perfection as Grecian genius endeavoured to produce in its statues of heroes and gods. They formed a part of the worship of beauty in the human person as in all other noble forms. Hence the victor in those games, at which all Greece was ambitious to be present, was the noblest of the race, a masterpiece of humanity. He was gazed at, as he proudly passed, as a model of manhood. He was the pride of his family, and honoured by his state and city among her great generals and statesmen. From the victory he departed crowned with a garland, was escorted home in a triumphal chariot, and in some instances, instead of being received through the ordinary gate, a breach was made in the city wall, that he might be received with a unique triumph. *So run*, i.e. after this manner—viz. as they who ran all, each endeavouring to be the one who shall receive the prize : not as the one who receives it—for the others strive as earnestly as he. There is one point in the comparison yet included in the *so*—the conduct of the athlete in regard of temperance, which he wishes to bring into especial prominence for their imitation—as concerning the matter in hand—his own abstinence from receiving this world's pelf, in order to save himself and them that heard him.

Striveth for the Mastery.—Respects in which the Christian life may be compared to a combat: (1) The Christian is surrounded by numerous, watchful, powerful, and active foes. (2) Armour and weapons having been supplied to him in sufficiency, he is distinctly informed that his safety depends upon his own self-exertion. *Is temperate*—Is self-controlling. Then, as now, the candidate for the race put himself under a long and severe training—in diet, in potations, in exercise, in order to tune himself up to the highest vigour.

Paul uses a Greek word that covers more than bodily temperance. It includes self-denial of every kind, and is used by him in reference to his own self-denials in eating idol sacrifices (chap. viii. 13,) in refusing churchly maintenance (ver. 15,) and in all the self-mortifying compliances of vers. 19-22. And this reference runs through to the end of the chapter; nay, even to the end of the next chapter. It is a thread of which the reader should not for a moment lose hold who would completely understand St Paul. *In all things*—The phrase "in all things" means that this course of temperence or abstinence was not confined to one thing, or to one class of things, but to every kind of food and drink, and every indulgence that had a tendency to render the body weak and effeminate. Epictetus, as quoted by

Grotius (in loco,) thus speaks of these preparations: "Do you wish to gain the prize at the Olympic games? consider the requisite preparations and the consequence. You must observe a strict regimen; must live on food which is unpleasant; must abstain from all delicacies; must exercise yourself at the prescribed times in heat and in cold; you must drink nothing cool; must take no wine as usual; you must put yourself under a pugilist, as you would under a physician, and afterwards enter the lists." *A corruptible crown*—From the pine-groves contiguous to the stadium the Corinthians would gather the branches, and wreath a garland for the brow of the victor, amid the applauding crowd of spectators. It was an evergreen—a not unfitting emblem of that earthly immortality of renown which it indicates that the wearer had attained. But, alas! this emblem of imperishability was itself perishable. The most eminent emblematic garland of victory was the laurel. It was said that Apollo, after having slain the dragon Python at Delphos, wreathed his brow with the laurel, and established his oracle at the Castalian spring issuing from the cave at Delphos. At the Olympic games they used the wild olive; at the Nemean, the parsley; and at the Isthmian, the pine. *We are incorruptible*—The blessings of Heaven that shall be bestowed on the righteous are often represented under the image of a crown or diadem; a crown that is unfading and eternal, 2 Tim. iv. 8; James i. 12; 1 Pet. v. 4; Rev. ii. 10; iii. 11; iv. 4. The doctrine here taught is, the necessity of making an effort to secure eternal life.

Not as uncertainly.—The word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It usually means, in the classic writers, obscurely. Here it means that he did not run as not knowing to what object he aimed. "I do not run at haphazard; I do not exert myself for naught; I know at what I aim, and I keep my eye fixed on the object; I have the goal and the crown in view." Probably, also, the Apostle intended to convey this idea, "I so live and act that I am sure of obtaining the crown. I make it a grand point of my life so to live that there may be no room for doubt about this matter." *Beateth the air*—Many an effort of Christians is merely beating the air. The energy is expended for naught. There is a want of wisdom, or skill, or perseverance; there is a failure of plan; or there is a mistake in regard to what is to be done, and what should be done. There is often among Christians very little aim or object; there is no plan; and the efforts are wasted, scattered, inefficient efforts; so that, at the close of life, many a man may say that he has spent his ministry or his Christian course mainly, or entirely, in beating the air.

The allusion is not to a "sham fight," or rehearsal or a fight with an imaginary adversary, but to a fight with a real adversary, (viz. here, the body,) in which the boxer vainly hits into the air instead of striking his antagonist.

Keep under my Body.—"But I chastise (bruise) my body" [the word literally signifies to strike heavily in the face, so as to render black and blue.] The body is the adversary, considered as the seat of the temptations of Satan, and especially of that self-indulgence which led the Corinthians to forget their Christian combat, and sit at meat in the idol's temple. *Have preached*—"Have heralded." The Greek word for preacher in the New Testament is herald, and to preach is to herald, (the word used here,) that is, to proclaim, to announce, to call. In the games the herald was one who made the proclamations so that Paul happily uses the word in its double sense. It is by only an apparent confusion that Paul here makes himself play the part both of herald and athlete. In fact, the Emperor Nero did once play both these parts. He was combatant, victor, and chosen herald to proclaim his own triumph. *I myself should be a castaway*—This word is taken from bad

metals, and denotes those which will not bear the test that is applied to them; that are found to be base and worthless, and are therefore cast away.

An examination of the victorious combatants took place after the contest, and if it could be proved that they had contended unlawfully or unfairly they were deprived of the prize and driven with disgrace from the games. So the Apostle, if he had proclaimed the laws of the combat to others, and not observed them himself, however successful he might apparently be, would be personally rejected as unqualified in the great day.

Anecdotes and Illustrations

Watchfulness.—Among my earliest recollections is a pillar which was set up as a mark of the borough bounds: as we passed it one day, I remember my father telling me a story about the pillar. "Some years ago," said he, "a writ was about to be served upon a man for debt; but the debtor, upon seeing the bailiff, started off and ran as hard as he could for this point (which was fully three miles from the town). The bailiff, though in full chase, could not overtake his man, who ran till he reached this pillar, and then, feeling that he was beyond the precincts of the borough, he turned round and defied the bailiff. The latter, knowing he had no authority to seize him, appeared calmly to submit to his fate; but just as he appeared to be returning to the town, stretching out his hand, he exclaimed, 'Well, let us part good friends, at any rate. Here's my hand.' The debtor, thrown off his guard, took the proffered hand, when the bailiff, with one desperate effort, pulled him within the boundary, and clapped the other hand upon his shoulder, shouting, 'You are my prisoner!'" Many a man who has run well, or fought well, has forfeited the race, or lost the battle, through thinking the struggle was over. He has made too sure. There is nothing more dangerous than taking things for granted.

Why we are Tried.—Suppose I made a very wonderful steam-engine, and put it into a ship, to make it into a steam-packet. It is all beautifully made and complete, and I want to "try" whether it is all good; whether the machinery is right and works well. Where should I send it—into a smooth sea or a rough sea? Should I send it "up the rapids"—up the river—against the stream, to see whether it would go up? I should. So God does with you. He furnishes you with everything you want, then puts you up "the rapids," sends you on rough water, just to "try" you, to see what you are made of. In Eastern lands swords are made of such fine steel that men can bend them almost double without breaking them. In order to "try" them when they are being made men bend them to see if they can be relied upon. So God "tries" you, to see what you are made of. In this way, then, it is a good thing to be "tempted." Even Jesus was "tempted." Luther said, "Prayer and temptations make the Christian."

Opening the Gate.—The following article contains a hint which many boys may profit by. There are too many youths who sit down and wait for others to "open the gate" for them when they meet with any difficulty, instead of using their own hands and strength in removing the obstacle. "I wish you would send a boy to open the gate for me," said a well-grown boy of ten to his mother, as he passed with his satchel upon his back, and surveyed its clasped fastenings. "Why, John, can't you open the gate for yourself?" said Mrs Easy. "A boy of your age and strength ought certainly to be able to do that." "I could do it, I suppose," said the boy, "but it's heavy, and I don't like the trouble. The servant can open it for me just as well. Pray, what is the use of having servants, if they are not to wait

upon us?" The servant was sent to open the gate. The boy passed out, and went whistling on his way to school. When he reached his seat in the academy he drew from his satchel his arithmetic, and began to inspect his sums. "I cannot do these," he whispered to his seat-mate, "they are too hard." "But you can try," replied his companion. "I know that I can try," said John, "but it's too much trouble. Pray what are teachers for, if not to help us out of difficulties? I shall carry my slate to Professor Helpwell." Alas! poor John. He had come to another closed gate—a gate leading into a beautiful science, "the laws of which are the mode in which God acts, in sustaining all the works of His hands"—the science of mathematics. He could have opened the gate and entered in alone, and explored the riches of the realm, but his mother had injudiciously let him rest with the idea that it is as well to have the gates opened for us as to exert our strength. The result was her son, like the young hopeful sent to Mr Wiseman, soon concluded he had no "genius" for mathematics, and threw up the study. The same was true of Latin. He could have learned the declensions of the nouns, and the conjugations of the verbs, as well as other boys of his age, but his seat-mate very kindly volunteered to "tell him in class," and what was the use in opening the gate into the Latin language when another would do it for him? Oh, no! John Easy had no idea of taxing his mental or physical strength when he could avoid it, and the consequence was that numerous gates remained closed to him all of life to come—gates to honour—gates to riches—gates to happiness! Children ought to be early taught that it is always best to help themselves.

Drifting Away.—Lightermen say that night-time is less dangerous than the day, except for the boats that get adrift. All sorts of craft made fast by their moorings enter into competition to slip off; sometimes they get away through the breaking of a worn link in an old chain; or the rope, tied so often that its threads have lost their strength, gives out, and then, away goes the barge very quietly, and at first as if guided by a man at the helm. After a while, as it floats farther out, it plays all sorts of antics, gets in the way of more orderly craft, or runs into a tiny boat or big ship, and flounders, perhaps to sink and carry its cargo to the mud at the bottom of the Thames. It is very easy for a barge to drift away; the outgoing of the tide bears it on. If the watchman is not looking it is soon too far off to be recovered. It can only be kept by being made fast to the moorings.

Blameless Bodies.—It is not enough that we keep our bodies from open, palpable violation of God's laws of health—from drunkenness and rioting. They have been given us to care for, to develop. Health is holiness; health is duty. A good digestion is as truly obligatory as a good conscience; pure blood is as truly a part of manhood as pure faith; a vigorous brain is as necessary to useful living as a vigorous will, which it often helps to make vigorous; and a well-ordered skin is the first condition of that cleanliness which is next to godliness. Therefore, good food and plenty of it, which makes good digestion; good air and plenty of oxygen in it, which makes good blood; rest, recreation, and, above all, sleep, which are the brain restorers; and bathing regularly and frequently, which keeps the skin healthy, are truly sacred duties as much as Bible-reading, praying, and church-going. These are not comforting words to the invalid; but they are needful words to those who are guilty of needless invalidism, and to those who are going carelessly in that direction. If you are sick, your first duty to yourself, your fellows, and your God is to get well. All other duties are, except in extraordinary cases, subordinate to that. If you have a reluctant body that must be spurred to all its duties like an over-jaded horse, your first duty is to feed it, rest it,

clean it, put it in repair. There are many whose first prayer, night and morning, should be, "Give me a blameless body"; and whose first endeavour in life should be to use those "means of grace" which will give them an answer to that petition.—*Dr Thoms.*

Questions on the Epistle

1. To whom was this Epistle written? 2. By whom was it written? 3. Where is Corinth? 4. What was the moral and intellectual condition of the citizens of Corinth in the days of the Apostle Paul? 4. To what race does Paul here refer? 5. How does he compare our life to that race? 6. What are the conditions of successful running? 7. And what the prize? 8. Can you quote another passage that speaks of running a race? (Heb. xii. 1.) 9. Sum up the main lessons of this Epistle for us to-day?

Books of Reference

Thomas Hughes' "Manliness of Christ"; *Dale's* "Laws of Christ for Common Life"; "Cambridge Bible; "Century Bible"; "Expositor's Bible; "Biblical Illustrator; *Hasting's* "Dictionary of the Bible."

General Subjects

Breaking through a Hedge

"He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh through an hedge, a serpent shall bite him."—Eccles. x. 8.

It is true that serpents do not fix their teeth into the flesh of their prey and tear and mangle it like a lion or a tiger; but the mischief that they do is no less fearful. Venomous serpents have two front teeth, which can be folded back when not required for service; through these teeth is a canal or duct, and behind them is a bag in which poisonous fluid is secreted. When the teeth are inserted in the flesh of the victim, the bag is pressed and the poisonous fluid runs down the canal into the wound (a little wound oftentimes) which has been made. The wound thus poisoned becomes red and inflamed. The limb swells; pains are felt all over the body; the sufferer becomes more or less drowsy, and at last, if no sufficient remedy is found—he dies. Hence it is that throughout Scripture the serpent is used as a symbol of evil, and its bite as a type of the mischief which is wrought by sin. Thus we read in the Book of Proverbs, "Look not upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it *biteth* like *a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.*"

Our text, then, has reference to the danger arising from these terrible creatures, and to the mischief they effect. "Whoso breaketh through a hedge, a serpent shall bite him." What sort of a hedge was the writer of this saying thinking of, and why should a man want to break through such a hedge? There can be little doubt as to the sort of hedge which was in the writer's mind. He was thinking of a hedge, or possibly rather of a wall or fence, which had been put up around an orchard or vineyard to keep out intruders and to preserve the fruit. Of such a vineyard and fence was he thinking, as

we read of in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, where it says, "My beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and he fenced it—made a wall about it—and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it."

That was the sort of hedge or wall the writer had in his mind, and the man who wanted to get over or break through it was a man who wanted to steal the fruit. We can almost see him; there he is looking with longing eyes at the bunches of purple grapes, his mouth watering at the sight. He will jump over that low wall; there is a gap in the hedge behind; no one will see him; he will be back again in less time than it takes to think of it. Now he is on the wall; now he is over. Ah! it is an old wall, and in one of the crannies a serpent has made its home. The man has disturbed the creature; he has trodden on its tail, and before the man knows it the serpent has turned and bitten him. So he does come back again, not with the grapes, but with a poisoned wound instead, and, quickly as he can, he goes limping to his home, his foot swelling every moment, his limbs aching with pain, and he himself afraid that he will die. He has broken through a hedge—his neighbour's hedge—and a serpent has bitten him.

And here is the lesson that I want you to learn. God in His kindness and mercy puts hedges or fences round our path. He does this to keep us from wandering into forbidden places. We can break through these hedges if we will, but if we do, a serpent will come out and bite us.

Now there are four principal hedges which God puts up about our path, concerning which I wish to speak to you.

I. There is the hedge of *Home*—and with most of you a very pleasant and beautiful hedge this is. It is a hedge that keeps you inside what should be to you a garden of delight—a garden of fruit, and a garden of flowers. This is the earliest of hedges, the hedge that surrounds us when we are very young. It is God's hedge—God's most happy, beautiful hedge—for little children. But it is His hedge for older children too. And when the home is a good and wise and Christian home, nothing can be more foolish on the part of these older children than to grow restless and discontent, and to wish to escape from its healthy restrictions. This they *can* do if they will; they can go outside of the home and there make friendships and form habits which they know that their parents will disapprove. But this is breaking through a hedge—God's hedge—and sooner or later a serpent will bite them.

II. A second hedge is the hedge of *Habit*. There comes a time, usually, when boys and girls *must* leave their father's house, when they *have* to go out into the larger world beyond—first it may be to school, and afterwards to business. And sometimes the boy or the girl who has been brought up in some quiet home in some little country town or village, has to go to the great city to make a living and to seek his fortune. Then comes the time of danger, and then comes the use of this hedge of habit. At home, in his father's house, the boy's habit was to read his Bible and to say his morning and evening prayers. His habit was every Sunday to go with his parents to the House of God, and most likely to a Sunday School. All these formed the hedge of habit with which he was surrounded at home, and which he brings with him to the city. What will he do as regards this hedge? Will he keep carefully and religiously within it, or will he break through this hedge and give up all these good ways that he has brought with him from his home? That is the question which he has to answer.

But still there is another hedge of habit—an inner hedge, as we might call it. So long as he was under his father's influence and his mother's care it was the boy's habit to speak the truth, to be upright and honest in his dealings, to

be thoughtful and considerate towards those about him. Will he keep inside this hedge, or will he find in it some gap by aid of which he may break through? This is another question he must answer. Now this hedge of habit is a most merciful hedge, but it is one which it is not difficult to break down, and one which, when it is broken down, is not easy again to put up.

III. But still there is another hedge, and that is the hedge of *Memory*. The hedge of habit may be broken down. All the good habits that the youth brought with him from his home—the reading of the Bible, attendance at God's house, even honesty of speech and of conduct—these may be gone, but memory remains. It is not always that memory is at work, or that her voice is heard, but one day when the lad is sick, or alone, or in trouble, then memory begins to play her part. And before the eye of his soul she begins to draw a picture of his past—of the happy home where he passed his boyhood, of his father and his mother, of their goodness and their love, of the prayers they offered on his behalf, and of the counsel and advice they gave him. It all comes back to him now. It is the hedge of memory which God in His goodness and patience sets around him even when he has broken other hedges down. Will he break this down as well? Then surely a most deadly serpent will come forth and bite him.

IV. And so, once again, I would have you notice this final hedge, the hedge of *Conscience*. Now when we are young, and especially if we have been wisely and lovingly trained, this hedge is a thick-set hedge, a hedge not easy to get through. But men may thin it and spoil it; nay, may seem, at least, completely to stub it up, so that none of it is lost. Then is their soul open to every danger, and they fall an easy prey to that "old serpent" called the devil.

These four hedges, then, does God set about us—the hedge of home, the hedge of habit, the hedge of memory, and the hedge of conscience.

I pray you not to complain of these hedges, or to think of them as troublesome and irksome. Thank God rather for planting them. Understand that they are the helps for your highest good, and that it is in mercy and in wisdom that He places them about your way.

Keep inside those hedges; treat them reverently; suffer no rude, sacrilegious hand to break them down, and remember that you cannot break through them yourself without penalty, for whoso breaketh through a hedge, a serpent will surely bite him.—*John Byles.*

Honey in Small Quantities

"It is not good to eat much honey."—Prov. xxv. 27.

Within five minutes' walk of nearly every day-school there is a sweetshop. I need not tell you the reason why—you have already guessed it. There may be boys and girls who do not care for sweet things, but I should not envy the task of the man who set out in order to find them. The search for a needle in a haystack would prove easy in comparison. We were coming home from a Sunday-school outing once, and several of the children were sick. In the innocence of my heart I thought that the journey in the train must have upset them, but an observant young secretary put another interpretation upon the happening. Before starting, the children had received pennies from their parents, and they had spent them all in buying chocolates and candies and cakes. Bread and butter or a bun was fare far and away too plain, and so they had to pay the penalty. When I tell you that the sugar we put in our tea and make our cakes and confectioneries with is a comparatively recent

commodity, you will be glad you did not live in the far-off days. Honey was the sugar of the olden times, and it was one of the great attractions of Canaan that it flowed with it. In these circumstances it is not surprising that we should come upon a great many references to honey in the Bible.

The term is mostly used in reference to the real article, but occasionally it is applied to things in life that are pleasant and sweet. "It is not good to eat much honey," says this writer of the Proverbs, and he means that it is a bad thing to be too greedy of glory. "It is not good to eat much honey," I repeat, and I wish to impress upon your minds the truth that it is a bad thing to have too much pleasure. A little is necessary and desirable. It would be pitiful if you boys and girls never had a holiday, never a bit of fun, never a game at home or a romp in the playground. If your parents were always to insist upon you bending over your tasks, all the glad heart would be taken out of you, and you would never know what it was to be young. The Duke of Wellington has been credited with saying that the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playgrounds of the public schools of England. I suppose he meant that the discipline of the games had stood the soldiers in good stead, proving almost equal to military drill. Certain it is that without these games you would be far less healthy and happy than you are. There is an old tradition of the Apostle John that he used to amuse himself with a tame partridge. One day a noble youth chanced to see him while engaged in this pastime, and expressed his surprise that one with such a reputation for saintliness should be so occupied. "What it that in your hand?" asked the Apostle. "It is my crossbow, with which I have been ranging the mountains," was the reply. "And do you keep it always strung?" "No; if I did so it would lose its elasticity." "Well," replied the Apostle, "it is for the same reason that I sometimes unbend my mind with what may seem to you a trivial occupation. It is a relief from overstrain. And then when the mind is refreshed, it returns with renewed vigour to the contemplation of the Heavenly mysteries." Now that story shows what a fine thing a little innocent recreation or diversion is. It shows something else. It brings out very clearly that our amusements are not ends in themselves but only means to ends. They are meant to be a kind of tonic to mind and body so that we may do our best work; they are not intended to take the place of work. It is very important that you should understand this, for there is a temptation in youth to think that life is a sort of merry-go-round. Allowed to have their own sweet will and wish, there are some young people who would never darken the door of a school-house again, and would make a bonfire of all their school books. It is natural when the heart is young to have such feelings, but if you yield to them, boys and girls, you will make havoc of your life.

I read a little time ago of a famous Australian cricketer named Bonner. He was being entertained at a dinner that was being given in honour of the great Samuel Johnson. In the course of the evening someone proposed the cricketer's health. In replying, he fairly amused the wise men present by declaring that after seeing the way in which the memory of Dr Samuel Johnson was revered, he was not sure that he would not rather have been such a man than have gained his greatest triumphs at cricket. I should think so indeed! No wonder the wise men were amused! Oh, young people, there are greater things in the world than cricket! These amusements are only meant to be what the salt and the essences that are put in our soups and puddings are meant to be—not the food but the flavouring of life.

You must put study first and play afterwards. You must have deeper interests than the games between the wickets or the goal-posts. You must not spend your days in a heated chase after what is merely pleasurable and enter-

taining. Ponder the words of the hymn we sometimes sing, and remember that they are true to each one of you :

" A charge to keep I have
A God to glorify.
A never dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky.
To serve this present age,
My calling to fulfil;
O may it all my powers engage
To do my Master's Will."

By all means take a little honey; it will do you good : but if you make a meal of it, it will sicken you and unfit you for the serious business for which you were born.—*J. Napier Milne.*

The Mouse-ear

There is nothing which people, both old and young, take so long to learn as the kind of work which is best worth doing for God.

What most people want to be doing is some great thing—something that prophets, and Apostles, or great heroes and heroines have done. But a little thing, a common everyday thing, such a thing as we require to do out of everybody's sight, in our daily duties, at the fireside, or in the school—that seems a poor kind of work to be called to do. Naaman's servants saw that thought in their master's face when he refused to go and wash in Jordan. " Master," they said, " if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? " It took some time to bring him to reason, and make him see that the little thing he was bid to do, was the best thing he could do.

But there are people of a quite different sort, people who shrink away from great work—even from the thought of great work—humble people who have poor ideas of themselves, and never aspire to do great things. People of this sort say : " Great things are not for us to do." It was something like that, Jeremiah said, when God asked him to go and speak for Him to his fellow-men. " Ah, Lord God! " he said, " I am but a child."

If Jeremiah had been older, or better acquainted with God's Word, it would not have seemed to him so difficult. But when God called him, and bade him go forth and speak to men about Heaven, his heart failed him. " Ah, Lord God! " he said, " I cannot be of use to Thee. I am not old enough, nor wise enough, nor learned enough—I am just a child."

Now that just expresses what many young people and children feel, when they are asked to do work for God : " What can *we* do? We are not old enough, nor strong enough, nor rich enough, nor grand enough." Walter Crosby, the pilot's son, had a very tender heart. And when he went along the street to his school and saw very poor people ill-dressed, or cold, or begging he would say to himself : " I wish I were a King, or an Earl, or a Lord Mayor, or a Bishop, I would buy bread and clothes for these poor people. I would build houses for them, and make them glad all the days of their life. But what can I do? I am only a boy, and I have nothing to give." And there was Eleanor Moseley. She saw sick people at her father's door every day. And sometimes she would be sorry for them. And sometimes she wished she were able to help them. But always she ended by saying to herself : " Oh, that I were a Queen or a Duchess! I would ride about in my carriage and visit the sick every day and all the day long. And I would say

to them, 'I am you sister and I love you—I love you—I love you. But what can I do? I am only Eleanor Moseley. And I am still a child.'"

I do not think that those who speak in that way are unwilling to work. On the contrary, they are very willing, nay eager, to work. They are looking forward to a time when they shall be workers for God. But it is not that time yet. It is not that time for a long while yet. They are not able just yet. They are too young, or too humble, or too poor as yet. They cry just as Jeremiah did: "Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak, for I am a child."

It is to young people who feel in that way I am going to speak to-day. I am going to mention some things—real work for God—which you are not too young to do. And I will begin, as I intend to end, by saying that you are not too young to make beautiful the home you live in.

I have just returned from a place where I lived many years and made many friends. Among these friends was one who was very little, far less than Eleanor Moseley, or Walter Crosby, or you. My friend was only a little flower. Where I first met with it, the people call it "Mouse-Ear," because the green leaf is shaped like a mouse's ear. It has a most lovely little flower: —five tiny petals, or flower-leaves, pale blue, or sometimes pink and blue, arranged in a circle. These tiny petals, where they join, surround a bright yellow cup. And in that cup, standing straight up in the centre, is a slender spear of light green, and on the point of that a very little ball of red. I know many beautiful flowers. I know the tall hollyhock, that stands up in our gardens in the fall of the year, like Aaron's rod that budded. I know the peony, that in the early summer puts on a finer velvet than a Queen's. And there is my lady the lily, and my lord the rose; and pansies and pinks and daffodils. I know them all, and how fair they are, and how bare our gardens would be without them. But among them all, I do not know one more beautiful, out and out, than my little friend, the mouse-ear.

It was a very humble place in which I first saw my friend. It was on the roadside, under the hollow of a hedge, between the raindrop of the hedge and the gutter which the rain-water makes on the road. Not a very sightly place—a place where snails creep and nettles grow, and the sun does not often shine. There shone the mouse-ear. There, after many years, I found it shining still. Morning and evening, from early summer till late harvest, without tiring, without murmuring, it shines on, like a little star in the shadow of the hedge, like the eye of a blessed Angel, making beautiful the dwelling-place where God has planted it. In many another place as lonely, as humble, and as infested with shadow, I have found my flower since then. And many a long talk the mouse-ear and I have had together. Many a time, lying on a green bank, I have laid my ear close to it to hear what it said. And many and many a time it spoke a blessed word to me. And this is what it always said: "Oh, my friend, make the place where God has put you beautiful. If it be but a tent in the desert, make it beautiful. If it be only a cottage in a lonely street, or an attic-room in a cottage, or a fireside, or a bench in a workshop, or a berth in a ship, or a seat in a school, or a place on your mother's knee, or a place in her heart, make it beautiful. And the sadder, the darker, the poorer the place is, be the more eager to make it beautiful. If it were as poor and lonely a place as you think mine to be—a place on a roadside, where no fine people come, with nobody to look at you but butterflies and sparrows and blades of grass, make it beautiful. And go on and ever on making it more and more beautiful. That is your work and mine in the world."

Always, when I came away from listening to the mouse-ear, it came into my mind that that was what Christ did when He was upon the earth—that is what the Angels do in Heaven—that is what redeemed spirits are doing in

God's presence. They are just making beautiful the place they dwell in. The heart of the mouse-ear's life and the heart of the life of Heaven are in this the same. Its desire is to fill the home with beauty and love. And I am sure, the poorer the home, if you could think of Angels and saints as poor, the greater their desire would be to make it beautiful.

What place could be drearier and more lonely than that sea-angel, Grace Darling, filled! A lighthouse on a low reef of rocks, was her home. Looking landward, on clear days, she could see Bamborough, St Abb's Head, Holy Island, and the mouth of the Tweed. Looking seaward, there were the long shoreless stretches of the Northern Ocean. Waves tumbling in upon the lowest rocks; waves leaping up in time of storm like wild horses; waves in peace; waves in tumult; waves covered with shadow and black with night; waves glancing with sunlight and bright as burnished silver! All around her, day after day, it was only this, only the world of waves, which Grace Darling saw. What she heard was the crying of sea-birds and storms. And when winter came, its awful voices sounded like calls of terror around the lonely lighthouse on the Fern Islands where it was built. Yet there, amid that world of waves, this brave girl made beautiful the place where God appointed her to dwell.

It was early in the month of September more than twenty years ago. The winter storms had begun early that year. One morning after a wild night, Grace Darling heard human voices mingling with the voices of the storm, and, going out, she saw a vessel on the rocks of the farthest island. What was she, that she should bestir herself at such a time? A feeble girl, with the seeds of an early death at work on her already! But she roused her father and pointed out the wreck. Were the human beings clinging to it to be allowed to perish? The old man saw no help for them. He shrank from the entreaty of his daughter to go out to them. It seemed to him certain death to venture on such a sea. The brave girl leaped into the boat of the lighthouse, and would go alone; and then the old man's courage was roused; And so, on the morning of that sixth day of September, those two, risking their lives for mercy, pulled through the tempest to the wreck. Nine human beings were there, in the very grasp of death. And these nine, one by one, this brave girl and her father, going and coming, rescued and carried to the lighthouse, and nursed them till help came.

O! the land rang with praises of this heroic maiden. And poets sang these praises. And royal people sent for her to their houses to see her. But this was her glory in the sight of God, that she had made beautiful for evermore, so that it shines to this day in the memory of men, the lonely and humble lot in which God had placed her.

I used to be a frequent visitor at a home which was every way different from Grace Darling's, and also poorer and drearier. It was a home in a lonesome village, and it consisted of a single room. A poor widow lived in it with her three children—two boys and a girl. All the joy of this widow's heart for this life depended on her children. And the highest service these children had it in their power at that time to render to her was to make the heart of their mother glad. I am happy to say that they were all good children; but I think the flower of the house was Jamie. He had never spoken a cross word to his mother. He had never disobeyed her. But the thing that filled her heart with the greatest joy was this—that Jamie had begun to fear God, and to give signs that his heart was right with God. Here is one little incident out of this boy's life. I do not suppose it was anything remarkable for him, or the best thing that might be told, but it is the thing concerning him I happen to know best. Being very poor, the widow had to send out her children early to work. Jamie was sent to a farm seven miles away to herd

some cows; but it was part of the bargain with the master, that he should get home every second Saturday afternoon, that he might go to church next day with his mother.

One Saturday, Jamie was pushing along the lonely road on his way home. He had only travelled about a mile, when, at a turn of the road, three or four very wicked boys, who disliked him for going home to church, and refusing to join them in mischief, came rushing out from a clump of trees with a fierce bull-dog, and said: "Brown, you must say the bad words we tell you, before you go another step, or we'll send the dog at you." And then they began to swear and speak the worst of words. Now there was one thing Jamie had learned at his mother's fireside, and that was, that it was wrong to take God's name in vain, and wrong to foul the tongue with bad words. But he simply said, "Let me go, I want to get home." "Not one step farther," said the biggest fellow, "until you say these words after me. Swear this oath and we'll let you go." And he repeated wild and wicked words. "I dare not say that," replied the widow's son; "and you have no right to ask me." "Swear the oath this moment, or we will let slip the dog." "I will not swear that oath; and you have no right to slip the dog on me." They gave him one more chance, and then let loose the dog. That night, as his mother and the other two sat round the fire, the brave boy told the rest of the adventure. It came into his head as his savage persecutors were unloosing the dog, that God, who shut the mouths of the lions in the den where Daniel was, could shut the mouth of the fierce dog on that lonely road. And God did shut the mouth of the dog. The big, hulking scoundrels, more brutal than their dog, yelled it at the harmless orphan boy. The dog barked furiously for a second or two, and went rushing up to him. But it neither bit nor offered to bite. And Jamie was delivered out of their hands. In all the land that night, there was not a spot more filled with peace and thankful joy than the humble fireside in the one poor room, where Jamie made his mother's heart glad, and his home beautiful, by telling what I have attempted to tell over again.

Jamie lives where my mouse-ear lived. And I went there to see him two or three years ago. The little hero of ten had become a man with a wife and two children. But he was in one thing the same as before. His pure upright life was making beautiful the humble home where God had placed him. And when I called on the old mother, and spoke about her son, her face lighted up into one of the pleasantest smiles, and she said: "He's a joy to me still; and although he has a house of his ain, he aye looks well to me."

I have just one other little fact to mention. As I have told you, it was on a lonely roadside I first discovered the little flower which has supplied me with my sermon. And for years it was as a wild flower only that I knew it. But one day a lady took me to see a bed of *forget-me-nots* in her garden; and to my surprise and joy I found that the forget-me-not of the garden was my little mouse-ear, brought in from the roadside and the common, and cultivated and made more beautiful, and christened with a new name. "Ah!" I said to myself, when I saw it, "that is just the way the dear Saviour does with the little human mouse-ears who hear His voice, and drink in His light, and make their homes beautiful with the beauty He bestowed! When they have served Him, and bloomed for Him, on the great highway and common below, He gathers them into His garden of delights, His new paradise above, and gives them a new name, and they become the forget-me-nots of God and a joy to Him for ever.—*Rev. A. Macleod, D.D.*

"We Cannot But——"

"For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."—Acts iv. 20.

What a wonderful gift is speech! We alone possess it of all creatures on the face of the earth; and it is only gradually that we receive it. I have often thought that is a great mercy. The Lord has ordained that we should first of all know something before we begin to talk. We talk quite enough nonsense as it is; how much worse would it have been if God had given us the power of speech before He had given us a little understanding, experience, and knowledge of life. Thus He ordains that we should have to wait a little before we talk. Some have to wait longer than others; and one cannot help feeling that it would have been a great mercy if some had to wait still longer.

We all find a difficulty in not speaking when we are able to speak; and the younger we are the more difficult we find it. I suppose it is because this is a new gift that you children find it so difficult to be silent for five minutes together. I have never known children, able to speak, who could be silent for that length of time, unless they were eating, or had something specially interesting to look at, or were asleep.

Now, I think we ought to be patient with you, for the joy of being able to speak must be a very great joy when we are first conscious of it. Thus, when a little child talks, talks, talks, all day long, I feel that those of us who are older, and have got over the novelty—although that takes a long time with some—ought to show a little patience, though the din is rather overpowering at times. "We cannot but speak," is the language of every child who rejoices in the gift of speech. He likes to use that talent even if he does not use any other.

Now, as you get on in life, you may not wish to speak, as much as formerly, for the love of speaking; yet there are certain things about which you must speak, though you get more kicks than thanks for so doing. You will see and hear some things about which you are bound to speak. Even the little child no sooner sees something that awakens his wonder than he goes to his mother and says, "Mother! mother! come and see what I have seen!" He "cannot but speak." His little heart is full of wonder, and it cannot contain it. Or perhaps he has a great joy. Then he says, as he looks up to his mother's face, "Oh, mother! I am so happy!" Or perhaps he has had some kind gift. It may be a Christmas or birthday gift; something that has given him great pleasure. Then he cannot be silent. And God did not intend that he should; but would have him tell out his gratitude. Or that child may have some sorrow or trial; and then he likes to have someone to whom he may express it, not only in words, but in tears; or by that wonderfully eloquent face that can assume a London fog in the brightest day of summer, when some trouble sweeps over the soul—he "cannot but speak."

Thus we speak by words, or tears, or sad countenance in our grief, or by a countenance that gleams like the sunshine in times of joy. We thank God for that power to tell out what is in us.

This power sometimes overcomes men. It was so on the occasion to which our text refers. These Apostles were asked not to speak in the name of Jesus; but they had seen Jesus, they had heard His wonderful words, and had witnessed His marvellous deeds. They knew something, too, about His Cross and Passion; they had seen Him after His Resurrection; yea, and had seen Him ascend to Heaven. Their hearts were filled with wonder and joy, and

they began to tell the world about it. The magistrates told them they must not talk about those things. Thus they were commanded "not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus."

But Peter and John could not understand this. They knew that God had told them to speak; and that on the Day of Pentecost fiery tongues had rested on them, and the Holy Spirit filled their hearts. They knew that they were sent forth to speak. They now, therefore, exclaimed, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye!" When man's command opposes God's, we know which to obey. When men tell us not to do what God tells us to do, we know exactly what course to take. At least, the Apostles did. They said, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." They knew that they had been permitted to see and to hear in order that they might speak. This is always the right order. The child begins to see and hear very soon, and it is only after he has seen and heard a good long time that he is able to speak. It is God's order of things that we should first take in before we give out. The Apostles had seen and heard, and now they spoke. It is impossible to silence people when they have a message like the Apostles. Now that has been the secret of the power of all great reformers and teachers. Luther, for instance, could not but speak the things which he had seen and heard; so John Knox. It was impossible for them to be silent—as impossible as it is for that little baby boy, when he sees something wonderful, to keep it all in and not say, "Mother, look!" He "cannot but speak." His little heart would burst with wonderment if he did not say that. That is the safety-valve that lets off his emotion.

It is impossible to kill the love of truth when once it is implanted in the human heart. Above all, it is impossible, when the love of Christ fills our heart, to crush or silence it.

Indeed, there are many things which cannot be crushed out of us; for instance, the love of music. There is a touching Polish story, translated into English, about "Janko, the Little Musician." Janko was a little boy, born in humble life. His mother was very poor: his father was dead; and no one seemed to understand little Janko. He was very frail; indeed, he had been so from his birth. He was not of much service in running errands or making himself generally useful; for wherever he went he used to listen to the birds as they sang, and run home and tell his mother what sweet sounds he had heard, exclaiming, "Oh, mother, come and hear it, it is so beautiful; it was like this—la, la, la." Then his mother, annoyed at his forgetting his errand, would say, "Away with you, you good-for-nothing boy, or I'll soon make you sing another tune." Even when he was sent to gather berries with other children he would often return empty-handed, telling his mother to come to the wood with him to hear all the beautiful sounds that came to him from every direction. When very young he became a shepherd-boy; but I am sorry to say that he often forgot the sheep as he heard the song, or even twitter, of birds, the rustle of leaves, and other sounds that broke upon the silence. The little fellow's soul was filled with the love of music, and every sound he heard seemed to strike a note that charmed him.

Sometimes, too, when the violinist was in the village inn—although little Janko never went into the inn, for he knew better, yet—he would crouch under the window outside and listen to the music; and oh, how he longed to have a fiddle in his own hand, if only for once, just to strike one note! He tried to make a fiddle of his own. For fiddle-strings he had horsehair. Often he would lift it to his ear and just touch the strings; and oh, what a wonderful sound they seemed to give forth! He was filled with rapture at this home-

made fiddle of his own, with nothing better than horsehair for fiddle strings!

One day, as he was passing the big castle near his humble home, and looking into the servants' hall, he saw a violin suspended on the wall. It was the butler's violin, which he used to play at night to please his sweetheart and the other servants. One night Janko stole into the grounds of the castle, and, from among the bushes, peeped into the servants' hall. He longed to touch the violin that hung there. The nightingale trilled its song, and seemed to say, "Go and touch it!" whereas the frog seemed to croak, "Don't." The moon, meanwhile, shone into the hall, and its light rested upon that butler's fiddle. Janko said to himself: "Oh, I wish I could climb that chair. I could then easily reach the strings, and just touch them once." Then he looked round, and thought there was no one near, and, having entered, climbed up quietly and touched the strings, which sent forth a gentle sound that thrilled him. But all at once a harsh voice was heard: "Who is there?" A light was got, and poor Janko was caught, and charged with attempting to steal the fiddle! He was brought before the magistrate, who very soon concluded that he was a naughty boy, and must be punished, and called an attendant in to cane him. That ruffian caned poor Janko until the voice that at first feebly cried, "Mammy, mammy!" was silenced with exhaustion, and little Janko had to be carried home. His poor body was frail at best; but his heartstrings were now broken. He was so overcome by the cruel accusation, and the still greater cruelty of the brute who had lashed him, that he became delirious, and, at length, died; but before he died he said to his mother, "Mother, Jesus will give me a *fiddle all my own* in Heaven!" It was the last thing he said, and then passed away. Yes, Jesus would give him a harp all his own, with which the butler's violin in the castle would ill compare.

The love of music in that little boy's heart was not to be crushed out by anything. Through life he had intensely loved music. Whatever sound he heard he caught and recognised as one note in the rich harmony of the world; and now, even when they accused and punished him mercilessly for a crime of which he was not guilty, and when dying of the effects of cruel treatment, he still loved to think of the time when he would have a fiddle all his own, which he could play without fear of magistrate, or need of the butler's favour. And when he died there was One Who knew the love that was in that young heart and satisfied it; for I fondly believe now he is among the choristers of the sky. Now if love of music cannot be crushed out of a heart, how much less the love of Christ. Once Jesus has set our heart aglow with His love "we cannot but speak of the things which we have seen and heard."

—*Rev. David Davies.*

Wireless Telegraphy

Have you ever seen an Atlantic liner? If you go to Liverpool you will see them anchored in the Mersey or drawn up by the landing-stage. It is a fine sight to see one of the great liners like the *Mauritania*, or the *Lusitania*, sailing slowly and majestically down the river on its way to the open sea. But if you were to see one of these ships, you would be sure to notice a curious object at the mast-head, and a wire running across between the masts, and I am quite sure you would want to know what it was. It is the apparatus for sending and receiving wireless telegrams. Ships that are fitted with this instrument can communicate with each other when they are far out at sea, and those that have the long distance apparatus can keep in touch with land during the whole voyage across the Atlantic. Some months

ago when I was on my way to New York, the latest news was posted every day on the notice-board, so that though we were far away in mid-ocean we knew what was going on on land, and some of the largest liners even publish daily newspapers! It is one of the most wonderful of scientific discoveries.

Some of you may remember that a year or two ago the White Star liner *Republic* went ashore in a fog on the coast of Newfoundland. The holds began to fill with water, and all the passengers were gathered on deck where they remained all through the cold night in anxious fear lest the great ship should go down before help could reach them. Meanwhile, all through those long anxious hours the wireless operator remained in his room sending message after message out across the water through the fog and darkness in the hope that it would reach some distant ship and bring it full steam ahead to their relief. But the hours passed, and the day dawned through the fog and still they waited, and still the water rose in the holds. But just as the passengers were beginning to fear the worst, the fog began to lift, when to their astonishment and unbounded joy they discovered that they were surrounded by steamers that had received their message of distress but had been unable to find them owing to the fog. And you can imagine how grateful they were to the operator who had stuck to his post and never left it till help came.

Now this life of ours, boys and girls, has often been compared to a sea voyage. Sometimes we sail along on calm seas and in fair weather. Sometimes we are fog-bound and cannot see a yard ahead. Sometimes the storms rage and we seem overwhelmed and well-nigh sink under them. Sometimes we are in danger of running on the rocks. And there are many hidden reefs, and strong currents, and we are in constant need of help. But we too can use the wireless telegraphy, and send messages seeking succour and deliverance, out through all the storms and fogs of our life. Prayer is the soul's wireless telegraphy. And the one unvarying rule for every seaman when in difficulty or distress is, "pray it through." Send the message seeking help, and keep on sending it until help comes. And come it will, be sure of that, though not always in the way you expected.

Wireless telegraphy is one of the most recent of all discoveries, and you can just imagine how astonished our forefathers would be if they came back to life and saw it in daily use. But the wireless telegraphy of the soul is as old as man himself. The Bible is full from cover to cover of the records of marvellous deliverances wrought through its medium. This is what the Psalmist said away back centuries and centuries ago—"This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." That is only one instance out of a vast number that you can find for yourselves. And it is just the same to-day. Whenever men and women, and boys and girls in temptation, or difficulty, or fear, cry to God for help and deliverance, He will send the help we need and save us from all our fears and all our troubles.

One last word. Keep your wireless apparatus in working order. Don't let it rust from want of use. This is what Paul meant when he said, "pray without ceasing." For we can use it not only in times of storm and stress but in fair weather and on calm seas. All through our life we can know the joy of unbroken communication with our Father in Heaven.

—*Archibald Reith.*

THE CHILDREN'S PULPIT

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,, 31.	Fifth Sunday after Easter and Rogation Days	,, ,, 4th	,,
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,, 37.	Second Sunday after Trinity	,, ,, 9th	,,
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,, 39.	Fourth Sunday after Trinity	,, ,, 20th	,,
,, 40.	Fifth Sunday after Trinity	,, ,, 27th	,,
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,, 43.	Eighth Sunday after Trinity	,, ,, 17th	,,
,, 44.	Ninth Sunday after Trinity	,, ,, 24th	,,
,, 45.	Tenth Sunday after Trinity	,, July 1st	,,
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,, 52.	Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity	,, ,, 19th	,,
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,, 54.	Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity	,, Sept. 2nd	,,
,, 55.	Twentieth Sunday after Trinity	,, ,, 9th	,,
,, 56.	Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity	,, ,, 16th	,,
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,, 59.	Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity	,, Oct. 7th	,,
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